

THE COMPLETE POETRY OF
CATULLUS

TRANSLATED AND WITH COMMENTARY BY
DAVID MULROY



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THE COMPLETE POETRY
OF CATULLUS



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WHEN I FIRST started working on my translations of Catullus, some years ago, Martha Osvat of Milwaukee went to the trouble of arranging a public reading in which I was given an opportunity to showcase my work, and my former student, Shirley Yousoufian, helped me practice for the event. I am glad to have this opportunity to acknowledge these services, which meant a great deal to me. I must also mention the contribution of an individual whom I have never met in person, Professor William W. Batstone of Ohio State University. At the request of the University of Wisconsin Press, Professor Batstone provided an extraordinarily thorough and insightful critique of an earlier draft of this work, and I think that I ended up with a much better book by heeding his advice on a long list of matters. Of course, I am also indebted to the University of Wisconsin Press for involving Professor Batstone in the project and for its general interest and support.

INTRODUCTION

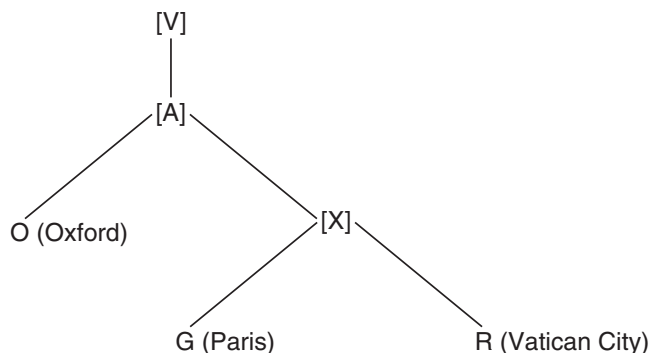
THE SURVIVAL OF CATULLUS' POEMS

IN HIS FIRST poem, Catullus asks his Muse to let his works survive for more than one age. In fact, they were well known from the time of their creation, in the first century B.C., until the end of the first century A.D. In the second century, however, when scribes began transferring classical literature from papyrus scrolls to more capacious "codices" (books in our sense of the word), Catullus' works seem to have been neglected, perhaps because they were not suitable for use by young students. Apparently, only one book of his verses made the journey from antiquity to the Renaissance. Appropriately enough, it seems to have been kept for some time in Verona, Catullus' hometown. The evidence consists of echoes of Catullus' poetry in verses by a monk, Hildemar, who lived in nearby Brescia from 841–845, and in a sermon in 966 by one Bishop Rather of Verona, who mentions the study of the "previously unread Catullus" as an example of frivolous, ungodly behavior. This Veronese manuscript might also have been the ultimate source of the copy of Catullus' Poem 62, a wedding song that was included in an anthology compiled in France in the ninth century and thus nearly became the only poem by Catullus to reach modernity.

Our ability to make such statements about the Catullan manuscript tradition is the result of the painstaking research of a series of scholars, most recently Julia Gaisser of Bryn Mawr College and Douglas F. S. Thomson of the University of Toronto. An ironic possibility mentioned by Gaisser is that Bishop Rather took Catullus' ungodly book with him when he moved to the Belgian Abbey of Lobbes, as he is said to have done, in 968. In any event, for the next three hundred years, there is no evidence of knowledge of Catullus in Verona and hardly any elsewhere.

Starting around 1290, scholars in the region of Padua and Verona are suddenly familiar with Catullus' poems again. Textual criticism has shown that the text first consulted by them ("V") was soon lost, but not before a copy was made ("A"). A was also lost after spawning at least two more copies: "O," an extant manuscript written around 1370 and preserved at

Oxford, and the lost “X,” which belonged to Petrarch and was itself the source of two extant copies made shortly after his death in 1374. Of X’s two offspring, “G” is now in Paris, in the Bibliothèque Nationale; “R” resides in the Vatican Library. The stemma of Catullan manuscripts of independent authority looks like this:



G and R contain an enigmatic epigram by one Benvenuto Campegiani that seems to commemorate the recovery of Catullus’ text.

To my fatherland I come from distant exile,
restored by a fellow citizen.
France bestowed his name from reeds. He notes
the route of the passing crowd.
Praise your Catullus with all of your talent. His scroll
lay hidden beneath a barrel.¹

Apparently, a Veronese native, whose name resembled a French word for reeds, found Catullus’ book in a foreign land, languishing in obscurity, and restored it to the scholars of Verona—at a time of renewed interest in secular literature. This probably refers to the arrival of V in Verona around 1290. If so, Catullus’ manuscript experienced the same kind of happy return to Verona from perilous journeys that Catullus himself celebrates in two of his best known works, Poems 4 and 31; and Catullus’ Muse answered his prayer in dramatic fashion.

Catullus’ poems as transmitted by V contain over two thousand lines of verse. This is more than was usually found in a single papyrus scroll or “book” in the ancient sense of the word. It is therefore likely that V contained a compilation of Catullus’ work from several different scrolls. The

poems' superficial characteristics suggest a threefold division. Poems 1 to 60 are short poems in a variety of meters. Poems 61 to 64, also in various meters, are much longer. Poems 65 to 116 are all written in the elegiac meter, which does not appear elsewhere in the collection. Thomson summarizes the strong evidence that these three groups of poems were originally published on separate scrolls.² Briefly, in manuscript O, Poem 60 ends five lines from the bottom of the page. Rather than beginning immediately, as is usually the case, Poem 61 starts at the top of the next page. Then starting with Poem 65, the first letter of each poem is illuminated, the second capitalized.

There is disagreement on how to interpret the order of the poems within each original book. The first few poems concerning Catullus' mistress, "Lesbia" (i.e., Poems 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 11), are obviously sequential, with expressions of timid infatuation yielding to outspoken passion and then bitter disillusionment. The obvious ordering of these six poems is exceptional. There is no agreement among scholars on whether there is any rationale behind the order of the other poems. If there is, it is not readily apparent.

CATULLUS' LIFE

What do we know about Catullus' life? The question cannot be answered without glancing at a long-standing debate among classical scholars. Happily, all sides do agree on some basics. St. Jerome's *Chronicle*, a source of much ancient chronology, reports that Catullus was born in Verona in 87 B.C. and died in Rome during his thirtieth year in 58 B.C. Catullus' own poems confirm his connection with Verona. His datable works, however, all belong to 56 B.C. or later. So Jerome was apparently right about Catullus' birthplace, but mistaken on the date of his death and his age at death or the date of his birth. Another source, the poet Ovid (*Amores* 3.9.61–62), confirms that Catullus died young. Looking at all this, scholars are generally content with the conclusion that Catullus was born in Verona, flourished in Rome around 55 B.C., and died a few years later. From what he tells us about himself, it seems likely that he was an *eques* or "knight." In other words, he was like Cicero: he came from a family of wealthy businessmen who had not held high political office in Rome. He was upper-class but not a "noble."

Most of Catullus' poems are ostensibly autobiographical. At the heart of his autobiography is a love affair with a woman whom he calls Lesbia.

An ancient author, Apuleius (*Apologia* 10), says that Lesbia was a pseudonym for a woman whose real name was Clodia. Scholars are inclined to accept this assertion. Although Apuleius lived in the second century A.D., his statement is probably based on a lost biography of Catullus written shortly after the poet's death.³ Moreover, Catullus' own poems confirm the identity of "Lesbia" with a Clodia, as we shall see.

We know of three women in Catullus' Rome who were called Clodia. They were sisters of a flamboyant aristocrat, Publius Clodius Pulcher. Clodius is most often remembered as the young man who sneaked into an all-female religious festival, disguised as a flute girl, for an illicit meeting with Julius Caesar's wife in 62 B.C. Clodius was tried for sacrilege but acquitted, despite Cicero's hostile testimony.⁴

The third element of Clodius' name, Pulcher, is a cognomen meaning "beautiful." Catullus' Poem 79 begins, "Lesbius est pulcher." *Lesbius* is the masculine form of Lesbia, the name that would be borne by Lesbia's brother. Hence the beginning of Poem 79 seems to be a pun meaning both "Lesbius is beautiful" and "Lesbia's brother is (Clodius) Pulcher." This textual evidence persuades most scholars that Apuleius was right about "Lesbia" being a Clodia. But do we know which of the three Clodias she was?

At first glance, it seems to be an easy choice. The most famous of the sisters was Clodia Metelli, Clodia the wife of Metellus, who was a consul in 60 B.C. and died the following year. Clodia Metelli is frequently mentioned in Cicero's correspondence and is a central figure in one of his speeches, the *Pro Caelio*, delivered in 56 B.C. In this speech, Cicero defends a young orator, Caelius Rufus, against charges instigated by Clodia Metelli, including her own attempted murder. Cicero defends Caelius by taking the offensive, wittily smearing Clodia's character. He makes constant allusions to rumors that she and Clodius were incestuous lovers. At one point, Cicero refers to Clodius as Clodia's husband, then apologizes for his "slip" saying, "I always make that mistake."⁵ In general, he depicts Clodia as a merry widow with an insatiable appetite for young men. He acknowledges that Caelius was her lover and claims that her charges really stem from the fact that he jilted her. Thus we know for certain that Clodia Metelli was linked romantically with Marcus Caelius Rufus, Cicero's client.

A number of Catullus' poems are directed against men who were evidently rivals for "Lesbia's" affections. These include one poem addressed to a "Caelius" (Poem 58) and three others concerning a "Rufus" (Poems 69, 71, and 77).⁶ The evidence that Catullus' "Lesbia" was really named

Clodia, combined with his allusions to a rival or rivals called variously Caelius and Rufus, lends credence to the hypothesis that Lesbia was Clodia Metelli. Nevertheless some scholars deny that this connection should be made or that much significance should be attached to it. The argument is not that a stronger case can be made for either of Clodia Metelli's less famous sisters.⁷ Instead, it is said that difficulties arising from the identification of Clodia Metelli with Lesbia and Catullus' Caelius and Rufus with M. Caelius Rufus cast doubt over the whole question. Since 1969, T. P. Wiseman of Exeter University, a distinguished British classicist, has been the leading skeptic on this issue. Other modern Catullan scholars, though not entirely convinced by Wiseman's arguments, generally take the position that we cannot be sure of Lesbia's identity and add that one should not give the question too much thought. The statement by Guy Lee in his translation of Catullus' poems is typical: "The question of Lesbia's identity is not of great importance to Catullus' readers. Its answer leaves his poetry unaffected. He has not wished his readers to identify Lesbia and that is why he has given her a pseudonym."⁸

For years, I was satisfied with formulations like these. While working on this translation, however, I became persuaded that the identification of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli is more likely to be accurate than is generally realized or than statements like Lee's imply. What led me to this belief was the discovery that two of the principal arguments against accepting the identification not only collapsed when probed but actually provided additional evidence in favor of it. I would not go so far as to say that the truth of the identification has been established beyond a reasonable doubt, but it does seem to me to meet a standard that is not very much lower. It is certainly the most likely of possible scenarios.

The first imploding argument may seem like a minor matter. Catullus' best-known Rufus poem is 69, in which Catullus ridicules Rufus for smelling bad. A wild goat, he says, inhabits the valley of Rufus' arms. In Poem 71, in which he is apparently talking to himself, Catullus says that a rival in love is suffering a double penalty. In intercourse, he torments himself with gout (*podagra*) and his lover with the odor of the goat of his arms.

If Lesbia is Clodia Metelli, this Rufus is almost certainly Marcus Caelius Rufus, Clodia's sometime lover and a vigorous young man at the time. In these poems, however, it appears that "Rufus" suffered from gout, which we do not associate with vigorous young men. Wiseman mentions these facts, letting the implication speak for itself: "The elegant Caelius Rufus was a histrionic orator, a good man in a rough-house, and

one of the best dancers of his generation; the malodorous Rufus of the poems suffered from gout.”⁹

It never struck me as unlikely that an individual might be described as elegant in friendly sources and smelly in hostile ones, but the gout did seem to be a stumbling block. It was, I thought, a condition associated with the elderly and infirm, like arthritis. The assertion that a young man was afflicted by it would seem to call for some explanation. It did not seem like a normal insult.

Troubled by this, I looked into the status of gout in classical antiquity. I found that it was a common affliction, attacking young and old alike, possibly because so much wine was drunk from lead-lined containers.¹⁰ Gout was associated with overindulgence and was for that reason a source of embarrassment. The works of Lucian (second century A.D.) include a brief parody, of uncertain authorship, entitled *Ocypus* (“Swift-foot,” a play on *Oedipus* [“Swollen-foot”]), in which the mock tragic hero, a vigorous young man who prides himself on his athleticism, complains of severe foot pain, supposedly the result of injuries sustained in exercising (lines 85–86). The doctor learns from the hero’s tutor, however, that the youth came home uninjured from the wrestling ground and was attacked by foot pain in his sleep after heavy eating and drinking (lines 105–7). The doctor declares that *Ocypus* has fallen prey to the terrible “Foot-huntress,” podagra or gout (lines 137–39). Clearly, in this case, modern associations are misleading. All the indications are that young Caelius Rufus was a bon vivant. The statement that he suffered from attacks of gout is exactly the sort of thing that we should expect from a jealous rival. It may even have been true.

The second collapsing argument is actually the mainstay of Wiseman’s case against equating Lesbia with Clodia Metelli. It revolves around chronology. The essential facts are these. Whereas in Poem 68 (line 146), Catullus refers to Lesbia as having been married at the beginning of their relationship, Clodia Metelli became a widow in 59 B.C. and is not known to have remarried. Catullus spent a year abroad on the staff of the governor of the province of Bithynia in 57 B.C. and returned to Rome in 56.¹¹ The affair between Clodia Metelli and Caelius blew up in Caelius’ sensational trial early in 56 B.C. Caesar invaded Britain in 55 B.C.

59: Death of Metellus

57: Catullus in Bithynia

56: *Pro Caelio*; Catullus returns from Bithynia

55: Invasion of Britain

Wiseman stresses that all of Catullus' datable poems belong to the years 56 or later. Some are dated by reference to his Bithynian journey and others to unique events such as Caesar's invasion of Britain. If, however, Lesbia is Clodia Metelli, her relationship with Catullus must have begun in 59 B.C. or earlier, when she was still married. According to Wiseman, this is inconsistent with the evidence: "The love affair between Catullus and Clodia took place, so far as the evidence allows us to know, in the period after Catullus' return from Bithynia in 56 B.C."¹²

Wiseman begins his survey of the chronological evidence with an ingenious analysis of Poem 36, on the *Annals* of Volusius. In this poem, Catullus celebrates a reconciliation with Lesbia. It is couched in a complicated joke. Lesbia has sworn to Venus that she would sacrifice select writings of "the worst poet" to the flames, if Catullus should be "restored to her and stop brandishing fierce iambs" (i.e., abusive verses).¹³ Although Lesbia's vow clearly referred to Catullus' poems, he offers to fulfill it by burning the works of one Volusius, his own candidate for the world's worst poet. In asking Venus to accept this offering, he invokes her in a traditional way as the goddess of various places, mostly sites of her famous temples. Among the places mentioned, however, three have no special association with Venus: Urii, Ancona, and Dyrrachium, "inn of the Adriatic." Wiseman discovers in these names a reference to Catullus' return to northern Italy from Asia Minor. These three towns are, he says, "the only likely ports of call for a ship . . . sailing up the Adriatic, and I think Catullus' readers were meant to recognize them as such. The allusion to the poet's journey would make Lesbia's vow look, in retrospect, like a *votum pro reditu Catulli* (a vow on behalf of Catullus' safe return)."¹⁴

The import of this observation for Wiseman was that Poem 36, like all the datable poems, was written after Catullus' return from Bithynia in 56 B.C. By implication, however, his analysis undermines his view of the chronological extent of the affair. If Lesbia prayed for Catullus' safe return from Bithynia, she must have had a relationship with him *before* he went to Bithynia. Furthermore, if her prayer was connected with the hope that he would "stop brandishing fierce iambs," it is obvious that their relationship had run into stormy weather before Catullus set sail. Wiseman argues against this. "Nobody knows," he says, "whether Lesbia really prayed for

Catullus' safe return; the poet was quite at liberty to invent the details of his relationship, and in any case, the ambiguity in this poem between the ideas of a journey's end and a reconciliation makes any precise biographical inference very hazardous."¹⁵

In fact, Wiseman has argued the first part of his case too well. After reading his analysis, it is difficult to view Poem 36 as anything other than a reference to Catullus' return from Bithynia and his simultaneous reconciliation with Lesbia. He was restored to her both physically, after his foreign travels, and emotionally, after a quarrel. The statement that the poet was "quite at liberty to invent the details of his relationship" begs the question of what possible motive he would have for inventing this particular detail. If his return from Bithynia had nothing to do with Lesbia and, in fact, antedated their whole relationship, why would he subtly merge the two themes? The more probable hypothesis is that the events were connected in reality. If so, Wiseman's own analysis of Poem 36 provides evidence of the critical fact for which he felt there was no evidence, that the affair started before Catullus left for Bithynia.

The identification of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli thus seems to me to acquire the status of high probability by the way circumstantial evidence, even the pieces emphasized by skeptical scholars, falls into place around it. I do not recommend using this probability as the foundation for detailed biographical speculation. It does, however, add a dimension to the Lesbia poems to know that they too, like the ones addressed to Caesar, Calvus, and Cicero, were probably inspired by an actual relationship with a historical figure of some importance. We also gain a very general chronological framework. Specifically, it follows from the identification that Catullus was first involved with Lesbia/Clodia Metelli in 60 or early 59 B.C., while she was still married. Poem 83, in which Catullus refers to Lesbia's husband as being alive, the very similar Poem 92, and Poem 71, in which "Rufus" is described as having intercourse with Catullus' love, all seem to have been written before Bithynia.¹⁶ Poems 2 and 3, on Lesbia's sparrow, are also strong candidates. As mentioned above, Poems 2 through 11 seem to be in chronological order. Poem 4, about Catullus' boat, is generally read as an evocation of his return journey from Bithynia. The order of the poems thus confirms the idea that the affair with Lesbia began before the journey and was resumed afterwards. By their position in the collection and by their content, Poems 2 and 3 seem to belong to the earliest, pre-Bithynian stage of the affair.¹⁷

Catullus' rival, Caelius Rufus, gained prominence in 58 B.C. by lead-

ing the successful prosecution of a corrupt governor of Macedonia, Antony Hybrida, who was defended by none other than Cicero. Cicero tells us that in the wake of this success Caelius took up residence on the fashionable Palatine hill and had a love affair with Clodia, which would be the obvious cause of Catullus' hostility. We know that Catullus left for Bithynia shortly thereafter and surmise from Poem 36 that he and Lesbia were not on good terms when he left. When he returned to Rome in 56, however, the affair between Clodia and Caelius had ended in a spectacular trial and, as Poem 36 implies, Catullus and Lesbia resumed theirs.

It is not possible to trace the ups and downs of Catullus' sentimental history after his return from Bithynia. As Catullus tells it, Clodia had numerous other lovers. His poems include denunciations that sound final (Poems 11 and 58) and others (Poems 68 and 104) in which he seems to have forgiven everything in the end. One of the great charms of the collection is that it leaves the readers to answer for themselves the question of how the affair ended, whether love or hate was the ultimate winner. One of the collection's ironies is that poor, wounded Catullus was no saint in the sexual realm himself. His poems imply unseemly extra-Lesbia entanglements with girls named Ipsithilla (Poem 32), Ameana (Poem 41), and Aufilena (Poem 110). In addition to this, he was infatuated with a boy named Juventius (Poems 21, 24, 48, 99).

At some point in the later stages of his relationship with Lesbia, Catullus' brother died. In his long Poem 68, he claims that the trauma of this event has made it impossible for him to write love poems and has given him a new perspective on Venus' "games." These he associates with his youth, when he first donned the pure white toga of adulthood. He is obviously speaking of his relationship with Lesbia from the perspective of several years at least. This fits in neatly with the assumption that the affair was begun by 59 B.C. and resumed in 56.

POETRY AND POLITICS IN THE TWILIGHT OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

It seems safe to say that poetry has little impact on any segment of our society, least of all politics. Personally, I have only one acquaintance who seasons his conversation with quotations from his favorite contemporary poets, and this makes him a bit of an oddity. He would have been right at home in Catullus' Rome, however. In that still largely oral culture, short poems seem to have had an impact on public discourse similar to that of

our electronic media with their commercial jingles, theme songs, and standing jokes. Because of the centrality of literature in education, and the influence of poetry in particular, politicians often wrote poetry. Of the people in Catullus' circle who are well known for other reasons, attested poets include Licinius Calvus (a prominent orator and Catullus' best friend), Cicero and his brother Quintus, Memmius (Catullus' governor in Bithynia), the orator Hortensius, and Julius Caesar. To be sure, some of their poems were just intellectual exercises. The description of constellations provided a favorite theme for that sort of enterprise. Others were designed to affect public opinion. These were often personal attacks on adversaries and could be appallingly obscene by our standards.

A vivid example dates from fifteen years after Catullus flourished. It is a poem written in 41 B.C. by Octavian, the later Augustus, when his control of Italy was being challenged by Antony's wife, Fulvia, and his brother, Lucius. The formidable Fulvia was also the widow of Clodius Pulcher, murdered by a political rival in 52 B.C. Glaphyra is the name of one of Antony's alleged mistresses, while Manius is Glaphyra's husband.

Since Antony's fucking Glaphyra, Fulvia wants
me to fuck *her* in revenge.
 Me to fuck *her*? And supposing Manius wants
 a piece of my ass? Unlikely.
 "Fuck or we'll fight," she proclaims. "Is your penis dearer
 than life?" Let trumpets blare!¹⁸

As my translation suggests, Octavian's language is as crude as possible. On the other hand, it is written in the demanding elegiac meter. What was the purpose of this bizarre blend of barbarity and verbal finesse?

In 41 B.C., Fulvia and Lucius Antonius had seized the town of Perusia. Lead sling bullets from battles around Perusia between their partisans and Octavian's have been recovered by archeologists. They are inscribed with exactly the same kind of vulgar abuse aimed, literally and figuratively, at Fulvia and Lucius and, from the other side, at Octavian:

I'm looking for Fulvia's frying pan (?).
 I'm looking for Octavian's ass.
 Bald Lucius and Fulvia, spread your ass.¹⁹

The similarity in spirit between Octavian's epigram and the inscriptions does not look like a coincidence. Presumably, the epigram was as prag-

matic and as political as the bullets: its purpose was to rouse hatred and contempt for Fulvia as widely as possible. The obscenity can be understood in this context. It was then, as it remains today, a way of demanding attention, a device to which Romans evidently resorted without restraint when they were seeking maximum effect on public opinion.

It is important to keep Octavian's epigram and those bullets in mind when one imagines Catullus' life in Rome in the previous decade. Judging by his later fame, he achieved some prominence as a poet during his lifetime. He was thus in a position to affect political events through his verse. A number of his surviving poems clearly represent efforts in that direction. Like Octavian, he uses obscenity to make himself heard.

We do not know anything about Catullus' politics until we get to the years of his datable poems, 55–54 B.C. We can, however, trace the earlier activities of two intimate associates. The first of these is Clodia Metelli herself. She lived at the epicenter of Roman politics when she began her relationship with Catullus. Her husband, Metellus, was Rome's most influential and outspoken *optimatus* or "aristocrat"—an oppressor of the poor in the eyes of his critics. In contrast, her brother, Clodius, was a leading *popularis* or "man of the people"—a reckless demagogue to his enemies. Though Clodia had a foot in each camp, Cicero's letters and his speech, the *Pro Caelio*, make it clear that her loyalties (if nothing else) lay with her brother. She was a *popularis*.

The one person who seems to have rivaled Clodia in Catullus' affection was the poet and orator Licinius Calvus. The four poems to or about Calvus (14, 50, 53, and 96) are intensely and unambivalently affectionate. (In fact, Poem 50 deserves to be recognized as one of the great love poems of antiquity, if that term can be used where sex is not overtly involved.) Calvus was a vociferous *optimatus*. Hence, friendship with Clodia and Calvus would have tugged Catullus in opposite directions on most political issues.

Three of the controversies that exercised Catullus' circle in the early fifties will provide a sense of the politics of the day and lead naturally into a consideration of the surprisingly important role that poetry played. First, in 60 B.C., the year in which Clodia's husband was consul, Julius Caesar, a *popularis*, crafted the alliance known as the first triumvirate with Rome's foremost military commander, Pompey, who was more of an *optimatus*, and the wealthy, elusive Crassus. Caesar was then elected to the consulship for 59 B.C.

The senate gave outgoing magistrates commands over foreign provinces. Caesar hoped to be given the command of Gaul after his consular year. The senate, however, planned to confer this honor on Metellus,

Clodia's husband. Before this situation was quite resolved, sometime early in 59 B.C., Metellus died. In the *Pro Caelio* (59–60), Cicero insinuates that Clodia poisoned him. In the wake of Metellus' sudden demise, the Gallic command was given to Caesar.²⁰ Now, he crudely exclaimed, he could "come down on the heads of his enemies."²¹ The magistrate who sponsored the legislation giving Gaul to Caesar was named Vatinius. Much of Calvus' fame as an orator stemmed from his repeated attempts to convict this same Vatinius of various crimes. Vatinius' legislation of 59 B.C. probably marked the beginning of this feud. Catullus was probably in the middle of these momentous events, as Clodia's lover and Calvus' best friend—or soon to be so. We have no information on his immediate reactions, but it is safe to assume that he was interested. When he finally does speak, it is to denounce the triumvirate.

A second controversy galvanized opposition to the triumvirate soon afterward. It concerned the throne of Egypt, a kingdom governed since the days of Alexander the Great by a Macedonian family, the Ptolemies. They had accumulated the greatest amount of wealth known to the western world at the time. In 60 B.C., one of several rival claimants to the throne paid the newly formed triumvirate six thousand talents, a great fortune, in return for a senatorial decree recognizing the legitimacy of his claim. This was Ptolemy Auletes ("The Flute Player"), who quickly alienated his subjects by raising taxes to recover the cost of bribing the Romans. In 59 B.C., he was forcibly ejected from Egypt and came to Rome hoping that the senate would instruct Pompey to restore him. Ptolemy took up residence in Pompey's villa to lobby for his restoration.

Pompey's apparent desire to intervene in Egypt excited resentment on both sides of the political spectrum. He was suspected of wanting dictatorial powers. Calvus' one fully preserved political epigram was most likely composed at this juncture. It makes light of the cognomen that Pompey affected, *Magnus* ("The Great"), in imitation of Alexander; it refers to speculation about his long-term goals; and it reflects the odd belief that scratching one's head with a single finger is effeminate.²²

All fear the Great as he scratches his head with a finger.
You know what he wants? A man.

Opposition to Ptolemy on this issue brought *optimates* like Calvus into temporary alliance with Clodius and Clodia. The individuals who supported the restoration were those who were attached to the triumvirs by

political expediency. Caelius Rufus belonged to this category. The prosecution that had catapulted him into prominence in 59 was engineered by the triumvirs.²³

Thus Clodia and Caelius were on opposite sides of the Ptolemy issue, and their relationship foundered on it. In 58 B.C., an Egyptian faction sent an elderly philosopher named Dio to Rome to urge the senate not to restore Ptolemy. Before he could address the senate, Dio was murdered, presumably by people acting on behalf of Ptolemy and Pompey. Clodia's principal charge against Caelius was that he took money from her on false pretenses and used it to arrange Dio's murder. (She added that after she discovered this, Caelius tried to have her poisoned, too, to silence her.) Thanks to Cicero's eloquence and to his own status as a protégé of the triumvirate, Caelius was acquitted. As Calvus' friend and Clodia's sometime lover, Catullus could not have liked the verdict at all.

The third controversy that permeated the politics of the day concerned Cicero himself. His inveterate enemy, Clodius, had succeeded in having him exiled by popular decree in 58. Cicero left Italy but campaigned by long distance to be restored. Eventually, Pompey weighed in on the orator's side. As a result he was welcomed back to Rome in September of 57 B.C. In 56 B.C., keeping the issue alive, Clodius tried in vain to convict several of the politicians, Pompey's allies, who had roused support for Cicero's restoration. He charged them with "violence" (*vis*), that is, with starting violent, pro-Cicero demonstrations. One has to wonder how Catullus felt about Cicero. On the one hand, Calvus and the other *optimates* supported Cicero's restoration and defended the politicians who had worked for it; on the other hand, Cicero had proceeded to save the despised Caelius and abuse Clodia. Catullus' Poem 49 seems crafted precisely to fuel speculation or perhaps as an expression of mixed feelings. It is ostensibly an expression of gratitude to Cicero for an unnamed favor, but it may be ironic. In it, Catullus says that Cicero is the best of all patrons—to the same degree that Catullus is the worst of all poets.

A surviving remark by Cicero and a vivid incident connected with his exile illustrate the role that poetry played in these political squabbles. The remark occurs in a letter from Cicero in exile to his brother, Quintus, back in Rome (*Ad Quintum fratrem* 1.3.8). Cicero asks Quintus to intervene on his behalf with various people including the orator Hortensius:

You should be careful about one thing, and this is the reason that I think you must cultivate Hortensius. . . . Make sure that your authorship of that verse about the

Aurelian law that was attributed to you when you ran for aedileship not be confirmed through false testimony. My worst fear is that when people realize how much sympathy for me your vigor and prayers are going to arouse, they will attack you quite vehemently.

We do not know the details of the case to which Cicero refers. The Aurelian law of 70 B.C. concerned the composition of juries. Evidently a single line of verse on that topic was attributed to Quintus when he was running for the office of aedile in 66 B.C., and it excited so much resentment that eight years later Cicero still fears its repercussions. This shows what a serious matter poetry could be in the political sphere.

The incident is recounted by Plutarch (*Pompey* 48.7). We learn from him that when Pompey spoke at an assembly on behalf of Milo, one of the politicians indicted by Clodius in 56, Clodius and his supporters tried to drown him out. Clodius stirred up his supporters by shouting, "What man wants a man?" and "Who scratches his head with a finger?" On cue, his supporters answered "Pompey!" In other words, Calvus' epigram had gained such currency that allusions to it could be used to rouse the Roman mob.

Plutarch's description is particularly credible because Cicero transmits an eyewitness account of the same event in another letter to his brother (*Ad Quintum fratrem* 2.3.2). Although he does not specifically mention Calvus' epigram, his description is consistent with Plutarch's. Cicero adds the information that Milo's friends counterattacked:

When Pompey rose, Clodius' gangs raised a shout, and so throughout his entire oration he was impeded not just by noise but by abuse and curses. He finished his speech, since he was rather brave. He was not frightened off. He delivered his entire speech, sometimes even in silence, and prevailed by his authority. But when he finished, Clodius stood. Such a clamor arose on our side, since we wanted to return the favor, that he was unsteady of mind, tongue, and face. This continued from the sixth hour, when Pompey finished, until the eighth, during which time all kinds of insults, and finally most obscene verses, were recited against Clodius and Clodia.

As we have seen, Poem 36 implies that Catullus wrote abusive poetry about Clodia before he went to Bithynia. Although those verses were not necessarily involved in this particular incident, they might have been. If Clodia asked Catullus to stop brandishing fierce iambs, she surely had scenes like the one described by Cicero in mind.

Catullus was in Bithynia from the spring of 57 until the spring of 56. This means that he probably returned to Rome shortly after Caelius' trial, when relations between Caelius and Clodia were certainly hostile. Poem 69, which has been cited several times already, gives every appearance of having been written at this juncture:

Rufus, stop wondering why no woman will slide
 her tender thigh beneath you,
 not though you weaken her will with gifts of fine
 apparel and sparkling gems.
 An injurious rumor has spread that a savage goat
 inhabits the vale of your arms,
 a terrible beast and not the sort with whom
 a beautiful girl would lie.
 So murder the pest or, left alone in your room,
 cease to wonder why.

As we have seen, it is probable that this was directed at M. Caelius Rufus. In fact, John Noonan, a classicist at the University of Florida, has pointed out that the fourth couplet contains a clever topical allusion that confirms Rufus' identity.²⁴ In February of 56, M. Caelius Rufus had prosecuted a former political ally named Calpurnius Bestia. According to Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 27.4), Caelius accused Bestia of killing his wives—it is not stated how many—by smearing a fast-acting poison, aconite, on their vaginas as they slept. Hence Catullus' description of Caelius' goatish odor as a "terrible Bestia/beast" (*mala valde . . . bestia*) and not the sort with whom a beautiful girl would lie" is apparently a pun referring to this trial. If so, it was written after February of 56, and probably while the memory of the trial was still fresh, that is, about the same time as Poem 36, when Clodia's prayer for a reconciliation with Catullus had just been answered. Poem 69 seems to have been Catullus' gallant contribution to a war of words between Clodia and Caelius. Though the poem has this personal dimension, Caelius was a prominent politician and supporter of the triumvirate. Catullus' evident purpose is to make him the object of public ridicule. Hence the poem may also have been the first of Catullus' extant political works, his opening salvo.

For the next few years, poetic attacks against the triumvirate became a staple of Catullus' repertoire. Possible motives include his friendship with their inveterate foe, Calvus, and his resentment of their protégé, Caelius.

However motivated, Catullus' attacks could not have come at a worse time, since these same years also represent the height of the triumvirate's powers. The issue of Cicero's exile had been one of several that revealed fissures in the triumvirate's solidarity. In April of 56, at the same time as Caelius' trial, Caesar addressed this problem at a conference at Luca in northern Italy during which he, Crassus, and Pompey settled their differences. The efficacy of the settlement is illustrated by Cicero's subsequent actions. Up to this point, he had acted with some independence. After Luca, he bowed to expediency and became a spokesman for the triumvirate and a eulogist of Caesar. This is most apparent in connection with Vatinius. He was elected to the office of praetor in 55, defeating the prominent *optimatus*, Cato, with the support of the triumvirate. When Vatinius left office, he was charged with bribery and prosecuted by the unwavering Calvus. At Caesar's request, Cicero conducted the defense, even though he had delivered a long denunciation of Vatinius at one of the trials of 56 B.C. Though he gained Vatinius' acquittal, Cicero's about-face was one of the low points of his career.²⁵ On the other hand, the vigor of Calvus' prosecution of Vatinius became proverbial. Seneca (*Controversiae* 7.4.6) preserves the story that Vatinius interrupted Calvus' speech to ask the presiding judge whether it was fair for him to be convicted just because his prosecutor was so eloquent.

Catullus' Poem 53 may commemorate Calvus' speech too. In any event, he joined forces with Calvus, deploying his talent for ridicule in several poems directed against the triumvirate, especially Caesar and a man named Mamurra, the commander of Caesar's engineers. A reference to the invasion of Britain in the first of these poems (Poem 29) date them to 55 B.C. or later.

Who can see and accept the fact
 (except for a lowlife scumbucket pig)
 that Mamurra possesses what used to belong
 to forested Gaul and faraway Britain?
 Will you actually see and accept the fact,
 Romulus fairy? . . .

"Romulus fairy," Catullus' phrase for Caesar, is *cinaede Romule* in Latin. *Cinaedus* denotes a man who plays the passive role in homosexual intercourse. Other poems that seem to have been written around the same time are 52, lamenting Vatinius' advancing career; 54, abusing several sup-

porters of the triumvirate; 57, abusing Caesar and Mamurra in terms very similar to 29; 93, expressing indifference to Caesar; and 114 and 115, ridiculing Mamurra under the pseudonym *Mentula* (Penis). According to the historian Suetonius, as we will see, Caesar acknowledged that these poems had permanently tarnished his reputation.

The composition of poems denouncing Caesar at this juncture was a reckless activity. Recall that Cicero was worried about the repercussions for his brother of a single, controversial verse written eight years earlier. And Catullus produced his controversial verses at exactly the time when the leaders of the triumvirate began defying all legal and ethical restraints in their respective quests for power, as a few examples will show.

One of the agreements reached at Luca was that Crassus and Pompey would be consuls in 55 B.C. As the election neared, however, there was a danger that an *optimatus* candidate, Domitius Ahenobarbus, would win one of the two spots. The triumvirs managed to postpone the elections until the beginning of 55. When they were finally held, troops from Caesar's Gallic legions flooded into the city. En route to the election assembly, Ahenobarbus' party was attacked and a servant was killed. Ahenobarbus decided to stay at home, and Crassus and Pompey were duly elected.²⁶

Arrangements for Ptolemy's restoration were apparently agreed upon at Luca. Ptolemy was restored by a representative of the triumvirate for a bribe of ten thousand talents.²⁷

In the fall of 55, Pompey presided at the opening of a huge new temple and theater complex on the banks of the Tiber. The entertainments that he sponsored climaxed in animal hunts. First five hundred lions, and a few of the hunters, were killed to the delight of the crowd, but then the grand finale backfired. The hunted were African elephants. Some of these did not fight but strode around the arena with trunks raised, making pathetic noises and winning the sympathy of the crowd. The general reaction was disgust at the cruelty of the spectacle.²⁸

As for Caesar, in 55 B.C. two Germanic tribes, approximately four hundred thousand strong, were forced to migrate across the Rhine into France by powerful neighbors. When Caesar ordered them to go back, they tried to negotiate. As messages were being exchanged between camps, a skirmish broke out between Roman and German cavalry forces. Though outnumbered, the Germans prevailed. This angered Caesar, who unleashed his legions against the unwary German camp. We have his own description of the sequel. The German men resisted among their carts and wagons. Their entire tribe was migrating, however. Women and children were

in the camp and fled when the fighting started. Caesar dispatched his cavalry after them. When the German men heard the screams of their women and children being slaughtered, they lost heart, broke ranks, and fled back to the banks of the Rhine, where they were overtaken and massacred too. When the Romans regrouped, they found that none of their own soldiers had been killed. A handful of German survivors were given permission to be camp followers, since they had nowhere else to go.²⁹

It was in the wake of this victory that Caesar stunned the Roman world by building a bridge across the Rhine in ten days and raiding Germany. He then assembled a fleet and invaded Britain at the end of the summer. That winter, the senate decreed twenty days of prayers and celebrations in gratitude to the gods for Caesar's accomplishments, the longest such "thanksgiving" in Roman history.³⁰ Only the *optimatus* Cato is known to have objected. He argued that Caesar's massacre of the German tribes violated divine law and proposed that the commander be handed over to the survivors for punishment.³¹

Inspired by Caesar's example, Crassus was preparing a great expedition against the Parthians on the eastern boundaries of the empire. (This was to end in disaster a year later when the Romans were routed in Mesopotamia. Crassus and his son were among those killed.)

There is evidence that Catullus and Calvus were eventually reconciled with Caesar. We are told as much by Suetonius (*Divus Julius* 73), a historian sympathetic to Caesar, as an example of his forgiving nature. (This passage is also used as evidence of Catullus' family wealth. Northern Italy was part of Caesar's Gallic command. Evidently, he often stayed at the Catullan villa at Sirmio, outside Verona.)

[Caesar] never got involved in such bitter rivalries that he would not gladly set them aside when the opportunity arose. . . . When Gaius Calvus began to try to arrange a reconciliation through friends after composing some notorious epigrams, Caesar wrote to him first of his own free will. Caesar did not deny that Valerius Catullus inflicted a lasting stain on him with his verses about Mamurra, but when Catullus apologized, Caesar invited him to dinner on the same day and continued to frequent his father's home just as he had done in the past.

In Catullus' poems, however, the only evidence of a reconciliation is found in the reference in Poem 11 to the achievements of "Caesar the great," and this is open to interpretation. Pompey's assumption of the cognomen, "The Great," in imitation of Alexander, was a source of derision. Catullus' line could be interpreted as sarcastic. Moreover, a brief, mutilated poem (54) sounds like the resumption of his attacks on Caesar after

an intermission. Catullus insults several minor supporters of the triumvirate, then poses a rhetorical question:

About to explode at my undeserving
iamb again, unique commander?

For whatever reason, the voices of Catullus and Calvus suddenly fell silent. In a letter dated to 46 B.C., Cicero speaks of Calvus in terms that suggest that he has been dead for a while.³² The next we hear of them is a reference in a poem by the poet Ovid written some forty years later. He imagines Catullus in Hades with garlands on his “youthful temples,” accompanied by Calvus.³³ More might have been made of the timing of their disappearance if it were not for the Suetonian tradition that they had both made peace with Caesar. To balance this, however, we have the observation by a Greek historian, another Dio, that Caesar eliminated numerous enemies but always moved secretly and when least expected, both to catch his victims off guard and to avoid incurring the hostility of others.³⁴ So there is room for speculation. Catullus’ relationship with Caesar resembles that with Clodia in that we cannot be entirely sure how the story ended.

CATULLUS’ SINCERITY

Over the years Catullus has impressed most readers as being remarkably “sincere.” He often sounds like a poet who was compelled to write by the force of his feelings, a situation that he dramatizes in Poem 50. In recent decades, however, Catullan scholars have tended to cast doubt on the importance of this impression.³⁵ They point out quite correctly that Catullus’ poems are the products of calculated verbal artistry, deeply indebted to literary antecedents, and that the value of a poem *qua* poem depends on its aesthetic qualities, not its sincerity. They add that Catullus’ poems are often deliberately ambiguous and that it is, in any event, very perilous to make inferences from what is said in a poem to the facts of a poet’s life or his actual feelings. Godwin cites with approval the comparison of Catullus with a “pop-singer, who appears to be voicing his deepest feelings but who is in fact performing for an audience an artificial piece which may have no relation to his own life.”³⁶

Despite all this, I would like to venture the opinion that Catullus’ sincerity is not entirely illusory or insignificant. The comparison with a “pop singer” cuts both ways. Some popular songs, even love songs, are inspired by real relationships. In fact, friends who know more about contempo-

rary music than I tell me that sincerity has been on the rise in recent decades. Apparently, Eric Clapton—the “world’s greatest guitarist” according to his fans—provides close parallels to Catullus. Clapton’s best-known love song, “Layla,” was inspired in part by literature—the Persian tale of the love of Majnun, “the demented one,” for the eponymous lady, but it was also Clapton’s expression of love for Patti Boyd Harrison, the wife of his friend, Beatle George Harrison. To extend the analogy, Clapton’s later composition, “Tears in Heaven,” concerns the tragic death of his young son. Though the purely artistic merits of his songs may not be affected by their autobiographical significance, the fact that they are expressions of genuine feelings obviously lends them a special kind of interest. And the same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of Catullus.

Catullus’ sincerity is an issue because of the apparent urgency of much of his writing. This is not a characteristic that one would predict on the basis of the literary milieu in which it took shape. In Catullus’ day, the classical work of Latin poetry was Ennius’ *Annals*, a heroic, eighteen-volume history of Rome written, like Homer’s epics, in dactylic hexameter. In Catullus’ own mind, his achievement as an artist was probably that he wrote Latin poetry in the style of the later Hellenistic poets, especially the great Callimachus, thus helping to bring Latin literature into the contemporary world. The Hellenistic poets that he emulated were professional literary scholars. They favored short poems reflecting their intellectual interests and expertise. They were erudite, allusive, polished, and often ironic. In comparing Hellenistic poems with Catullus’, one sees how Catullus has incorporated these qualities into his work, but one is also struck by the fact that his poems seem to be infused by more urgent feelings. Poem 2, for example, concerns Lesbia’s pet sparrow. At first glance, it seems like an unpromising topic for an emotional outburst. Catullus’ words, however, lend themselves to an allegorical interpretation in which the sparrow is a phallic symbol.³⁷ He is the delight of Catullus’ girl. She holds him in her lap and plays with him when she feels mischievous or blue or wants to calm her passion. Catullus wishes that he could play with the sparrow the way the girl does, and so forth. Allegory may be too strong a term, but in one way or another playing with the sparrow obviously represents the kind of physical intimacy that Catullus longs for.

Catullus’ sparrow has Hellenistic antecedents. There is a sub-genre of epigrams in which troubled poets apostrophize animals. An example is provided by one Meleager (*Palatine Anthology* 7.195), a major Hellenistic artist:

Cricket, my passions' distraction, enticer of sleep,
 the countryside's winged Muse
 and the lyre's natural rival, play me a love song,
 beating your wings with your feet.
 Rescue me, cricket, from struggles with sleepless care,
 weave an escape from desires.
 Your gifts I will give in the morning, a juicy leek
 and dewy drops from my mouth.

Whereas there is no clear connection between Meleager's sleepless care and the cricket, every line and virtually every word in Catullus' poem leads via the image of the sparrow to his desire for his girl. This is the kind of focus that gives his poetry the appearance of genuine emotion. It is difficult to resist thinking that he really was smitten when he wrote it. The bird might be a figment, but Catullus' sexual desire is palpable.

Many of Catullus' compositions lend themselves to similar comment. For one more example, consider Poem 70:

My woman says that she would prefer none other
 to me though Jupiter sought her.
 She says, but a woman's words to a lover belong
 on wind and rapid water.

The image of writing women's oaths on water did not originate with Catullus; it is a Greek proverb first occurring in a line attributed to Sophocles (*Fragment* 742). That a lover's promises are unreliable was also a cliché. Catullus' epigram is possibly an imitation of one by Callimachus (*Palatine Anthology* 5.9):

Callignotus swore to Ionis never to hold
 any man or woman more dear.
 He swore, but lovers' oaths are truly unable
 to reach immortal ears.
 Now he burns for a man. Of the girl, as Megarians say:
 no account or number.

Catullus puts himself into the poem as the betrayed lover, and everything in it illuminates his own feeling of disillusion. In contrast, Callimachus is detached and amused. He complicates the issue of personal loyalty by

stressing that Callignotus changed the gender as well as the identity of his lover. The reference to a Megarian proverb, a learned allusion, introduces yet another topic of uncertain relevance. Of course, earlier biographical critics went too far in inferring from texts like Poem 70 that Clodia was at the time of composition holding out the prospect of marriage to Catullus. Though the specific circumstances that inspired the poem are unrecoverable, nevertheless it can at least be said that the poem is an excellent representation of heartfelt disillusionment, whereas Callimachus' poem does not even attempt to be.

As the examples cited show, Catullus' emotional urgency is compatible with literary allusiveness and the use of other rhetorical devices. In fact, Catullus' peculiar charm could be described as a combination of the characteristics of a literary scholar and a teenager in love. This combination is illustrated by his longest surviving work, Poem 64. This represents a genre that was nameless in antiquity and has come to be called an *epyllion* or miniature epic. The only other fully extant example is *Europa* by one Moschus. Callimachus' *Hecale*, inspired by the legends of Theseus, was much more influential, but only fragments survive.

Eschewing epic grandeur and straightforward narrative lines, the *epyllia* wove together curious episodes from myths in novel ways. Apparently, a common device was the *ecphrasis*. This is the description of a work of art so detailed and vivid that it becomes a story within the story. The archetypal *ecphrasis* is Homer's description of the shield of Achilles in Book 18 of the *Iliad*. To judge by Catullus' Poem 64 and *Europa*, the *ecphrasis* was a central feature of *epyllia*. In Moschus' poem, the narrator digresses from the story of Europa to tell the rather similar story of Io, which happens to be depicted on the basket that Europa is using to gather flowers.

In the same way, Catullus' Poem 64 combines the myth of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis with the story of Ariadne and Theseus, which is depicted on a tapestry on Peleus' bed. Catullus' treatment of the two myths is itself a fabric of literary allusions. The opening lines are reminiscent of Euripides' *Medea*. The influences of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, the *Iliad*, and even Hesiod's myth of the Golden Age are obvious. Catullus' vivid evocation of the sacrifice of Polyxena seems indebted to the sacrifice of Iphigenia in the *De Rerum Natura* by his contemporary Lucretius.

On the other hand, there are striking similarities between Catullus' characters and the feelings that he ascribes to himself in his shorter works. To pick just two examples, in Poem 64, Catullus describes Ariadne in love with Theseus as the victim of the boy (Cupid) "who mixes people's joys

with cares" (95, translated here as "blends the joys of men with sorrow"). In Poem 68, he says that in his youth he himself was no stranger to the goddess (Venus) "who mixes sweet bitterness with cares" (17, translated here as "the goddess of bittersweet cares"). At 64.335–36, the Fates say that no love has ever joined lovers in such a compact as that which has joined Peleus and Thetis; in Poem 87, Catullus says that no trust was ever found in any compact like that in his love for Lesbia. Such echoes suggest that in describing mythical situations Catullus drew not only from literary predecessors but also from his own feelings.³⁸ When he composed Ariadne's words, it seems obvious that he was thinking about his feelings when Lesbia abandoned him.

By way of contrast, the emotional peak of Moschus' *Europa* occurs when the heroine finds herself in the middle of the sea on the back of a bull (Zeus in disguise) who is loping over the water without getting his hooves wet. She exclaims:

Who are you, bull divine, and where are you taking me?
 How travel these difficult roads with hooves, not fearing
 the sea? For the sea is meant to be traveled by speedy
 ships, and bulls are afraid of the salty way.
 What pleasing food or drink will the brine produce?
 You are surely a god. Your actions suit the gods.
 The seafaring dolphins spend no time on earth,
 nor bulls on the deep, but you dauntlessly race across
 the land and sea, and use your hooves as oars. (135–43)

The appeal of the passage is the thoroughly bizarre nature of the situation. Unlike Ariadne's abandonment, it is hard to imagine that it had any obvious parallels in the poet's experience.

To the extent that only his poem's formal qualities are involved, Catullus' apparent emotional urgency could be entirely factitious. There are, however, other indications that it was genuine. One is that Catullus was a wealthy amateur. He did not produce poems to please a wealthy patron. Then too, as we have seen, there is evidence that his political verse was serious business. One might suppose that the political poems had real occasions while his love songs were fictional, just as some musicians in our Vietnam era produced serious protest songs alongside conventional love lyrics. The problem with this formulation when applied to Catullus is that a number of his poems straddle both worlds. Poems 79 (*Lesbius est pulcher*)

and 43, in which Mamurra's mistress is compared with Lesbia, are examples.

The most compelling pieces of evidence for the genuinely autobiographical nature of much of Catullus' poetry, however, are his explicit statements in Poem 68. This is ostensibly a letter to a friend, probably Manlius Torquatus, who has requested a gift of love poetry from Catullus because he has been separated from his wife or lover. Catullus says that he cannot comply because his brother's death has made it impossible for him to take love affairs seriously. He goes on to reminisce, however, about a great favor that a certain "Allius" once performed: he lent his house to Lesbia and Catullus for a romantic rendezvous. A series of passages that sound like Catullus' stream of consciousness ensues. Allusions to the myths of Troy, where Catullus' brother happened to die, are interwoven with expressions of grief at his brother's death and attempts to come to terms with his ambivalent feelings about Lesbia.

No one has ever doubted that the death of Catullus' brother was a real event that was more or less directly reflected in Poems 65 and 101 as well as in 68. It is striking that in Poem 68, Catullus treats his stormy relationship with Lesbia as being just as real as, though ultimately less important than, his brother's death. And he makes it clear that his love poetry flowed from this experience. When his brother's death cast a pallor over his love life, the love poetry stopped. Again, I am not suggesting that Catullus' poems are a direct transcription of his experiences, an encoded diary. I do share the sense with many readers of past generations that his poetry has a comparatively close and immediate connection with real feelings, persons, and events.

In a major, recent work on Catullus, John Newman makes this excellent point about the relationship between Hellenistic and Roman literature: "Because Roman society was more primitive than that of the contemporary Greek world, when Hellenistic genres entered this new ambience, they tended to retrace their development, to revert to type. They underwent what biologists call recapitulation of the evolutionary process."³⁹ Presumably, personal poetry originated in a time before literary scholars and critics, when people discovered that they could use artful language to please their friends and lovers, hurt their enemies, and soothe their own feelings. In my opinion, the processes that Catullus recapitulated included that discovery. In other words, he revisited poetry's ultimate source. To me that is an essential part of his interest and appeal.

A NOTE ON RHYTHM AND DICTION

Although there is little agreement on the exact sound of ancient Greek and Roman poems, it is clear that they had regular rhythms. They were divided into lines that took determinate amounts of time to pronounce as measured by points of emphasis falling at regular intervals. To put it another way, the Greeks and Romans thought that the difference between poetry and prose was that you could tap your feet or snap your fingers in time with the former, but not the latter. As Quintilian (9.3.55) says, *oratio non descendet ad crepitum digitorum et pedum* (“Prose will not stoop to being measured by the beat of fingers and feet.”).

By this definition, of course, modern free verse is a form of prose. Only more traditional poems would qualify as poetry, for example, lines like these by Robert Frost:

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.⁴⁰

In a recent book, Amittai Aviram argues that it is precisely the absence of audible rhythm that explains how little popularity literate poetry enjoys in our society.⁴¹ In any event, the stark contrast between the regular rhythms of ancient poetry and the lawlessness of much modern verse is certainly significant and perhaps worthy of more attention than it has received.

Rhythm in English is based on word stress. In words of two or more syllables, one (or more) is pronounced with greater tension than the others. Similarly, in a string of monosyllables, some are stressed more than others, depending upon the semantic and rhythmic context.

In contrast, ancient Greek words did not have stress accents. Ancient Greek poetry was based on the length of syllables, that is, the amount of time taken to pronounce them, rather than on word stress. Although Latin words had stress accents, Latin poetry imitated Greek in being based on patterns of long and short syllables. In such patterns, in both languages, there are places where either a long or a short syllable is required and other places that admit of variation, where the length of the syllable is not prescribed at all or where one can have either one long syllable or two short ones. For example, the pattern for Homer’s meter, dactylic hexameter, is as follows:

— ∪ ∪ / — ∪ ∪ / — ∪ ∪ / — ∪ ∪ / — ∪ ∪ / — x

In the first five feet, a long syllable must be followed by one more long or by two shorts. In the last foot, a long syllable is followed by one that may be either long or short. Oxford Classicist Martin West uses the term *princeps* (plural: *principes*) for positions in Greek and Latin meters where long syllables are required. Although there are exceptions, in Greek and Latin meters generally *principes* are separated from each other either by one long or short syllable or by two short ones.

One encounters different views on how Greek and Latin poetry should be read. For English speakers the issue boils down to whether *principes* should be artificially stressed, so that the lines sound obviously rhythmic to us, or whether a sufficient sense of rhythm can be conveyed by the length of the Greek and Latin words carefully pronounced. In one way or another, however, it was the regular intervals between *principes* that made Greek and Latin verse rhythmic. As West writes: “The recurrence of [*principes*] at every second or third position in most metres gives a clear sense of rhythm, a rhythm which often continues smoothly from one period into the next. Verse which is to be delivered in procession or with dancing cannot be too unrhythmical. And the ancients were well acquainted with the practice of beating time to music or to recited verse by clapping, snapping the fingers, or tapping the foot.”⁴²

In my translations of Catullus, I have attempted to capture the general effect of such rhythm in a way that is perceptible to English speakers, for whom it is all a matter of word stress. As a general rule, I intend that a fixed number of syllables be stressed in each line. Such syllables are separated by one or two unstressed syllables, for example,

/ / / /
Whom do I give my debonair, new
/ / / /
pumice-polished booklet to?
/ / / /
You, Cornelius! You were inclined
/ / / /
To think that my banter amounted to something
(Poem 1.1–4)

Most of Catullus' first 60 poems are written in the Phalaecean or hendecasyllabic meter, whose pattern in Greek and Latin was x x / — ∪ ∪ / — ∪ ∪ /

– ∼ / – x. I have translated these into lines with four stressed syllables, as illustrated by the four lines above. Catullus' Phalaecean poems are: 1–3, 5–7, 9, 10, 12–16, 21, 23, 24, 26–28, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 40–43, 45–50, 53–58b.

A few poems in 1–60 are in different meters whose lines are approximately the same length as the hendecasyllables, for example, Poems 4, 29, and 52 in iambic trimeter, with twelve syllables per line, instead of eleven. I have translated these in the same way as the Phalaeceans.

Eight of Catullus' poems (8, 22, 31, 37, 39, 44, 59, 60) are in the interesting choliambic (limping iambic) meter. In Greek and Latin, this begins with five iambs, but concludes with a trochee. The meter is thus distinctive in that it violates the general rule by which *principes* are separated by one or two syllables. In choliambic lines, the last two *principes* are adjacent to each other. In my translations, I have tried to capture this effect by juxtaposing an iamb and a trochee in the third and fourth positions respectively of lines with five stresses:

/ / / / /
 Poor Catullus, stop playing the fool!
 / / / / /
 Seeing that something has died, deem it dead.
 / / / / /
 Bright were the suns that shone once for you
 (Poem 8.1–3)

Two of Catullus' poems (11 and 51) are written in Sapphic stanzas: three lines consisting of four trochees with a dactyl in the middle and a fourth line consisting of a dactyl and a spondee. I have rendered these with three four-beat lines followed by a two-beat line:

/ / / /
 Catullus' comrades, wherever he goes,
 / / / /
 whether he reaches the Indians' realm,
 / / / /
 where the far-resounding eastern wave
 / /
 pummels the shore
 (Poem 11.1–4)

INTRODUCTION

Poems 34 and 61 are composed in somewhat similar stanzas in Latin. In my version, the former is translated into stanzas of three three-beat lines followed by a two-beat line:

/ / /
In Diana's strength secure,
/ / /
we'll sing our song to her,
/ / /
as becomes a chorus of pure
/ /
youths and maidens.
(Poem 34.1–4)

The latter I have rendered into stanzas with four lines of three beats and one with two:

/ / /
Inhabiting Helicon's height,
/ / /
O child of Urania's race,
/ / /
who takes the tender slip
/ / /
of a girl for a man's embrace,
/ /
O Hymen Hymenaeus.
(Poem 61.1–5)

In the case of these two stanzaic compositions, I have used regular patterns of end rhymes to reinforce their rhythms. There is no such pattern of end rhymes in the Latin original. Indeed, classical Roman poets in general seem to have been indifferent to end rhyme, perhaps because the freedom of Latin word order and the presence of inflectional endings would have made such patterns too easy to create. On the other hand, there are a few instances of end rhyme in Catullus that may not be entirely coincidental. For example, the first four and last two lines of Poem 1 end with the following words respectively: *libellum*; *expolitum*; *solebas*; *nugas*; *Virgo*; *saeclo*. Similarly, the first two and last two lines of Poem 28 end: *inanis*; *ex-*

peditis; Deaque; Remique. From time to time in the non-stanzaic poems, I have imitated this occasional use of end rhyme to reinforce the idea that the translations are meant to be read rhythmically.

Poem 17 is written in the Priapean meter, which was associated with hymns to the fertility god, Priapus. This is a rapid meter with relatively long lines. I have translated it into five-beat lines with four or five dactyls apiece:

/ / / / /

Colony, anxious to frolic the length of your bridge,

/ / / / /

ready to hop but afraid of the wobbly legs

/ / / / /

of your little old bridgey erected on second-hand splinters,

/ / / / /

which threatens to fall on its back and to sink in the swamp, etc.

(Poem 17.1–4)

The meter of Poem 63, the most unusual in Catullus' collection, is even more rapid. It is in the galliambic meter, which was meant to capture the frantic singing and dancing of the priests of Cybele. In the middle of the line there is a mandatory spondee followed by a word division and two shorts. It is as though in each line the speaker must stop to catch his breath and start over. I have tried to get something of this flavor with six-beat lines consisting of dactyls but having two adjacent stressed syllables in each line, for the halting effect.

/ / / / / /

Attis had hastened across towering seas on a raft.

/ / / / / /

Eagerly setting his swift foot in the Phrygian grove,

/ / / / / /

he entered the goddess's dark, forest-encircled domain

/ / / / / /

and there was attacked by insanity's goad. Blinded by passion,

/ / / / / /

he lightened the weight of his loins with a sharp fragment of flint.

(Poem 63.1–5)

INTRODUCTION

Poems 62 and 64 are in dactylic hexameters, the heroic meter of Homer and Vergil. I have rendered these with five-beat lines:

/ / / / /
 Pines descended from Pelion's peak, they say,
 / / / / /
 anciently swam through Neptune's surging waters
 / / / / /
 to the land the Phasis lapped and Aetes ruled,
 (Poem 64.1–3)

I have also used five-beat lines in translating Poems 25 and 30, which are metrically unique in Catallus. Their Latin meters (iambic tetrameter and “greater Asclepiads” respectively) have relatively long lines.

Poems 65 through 116 are all in elegiac couplets. These consist of lines of dactylic hexameter followed by shorter lines, which resemble the beginning of a hexameter repeated. Couplets generally express complete thoughts, and conciseness is one of their chief virtues. I have tried to capture these qualities with couplets consisting of a five-beat line followed by a three-beat line:

/ / / / /
 Though sorrow, care, and exhaustion call me away
 / / /
 from the learned maidens, Ortalus,
 / / / / /
 and my mind, awash in troubles, cannot deliver
 / / /
 the Muses' sweet conceptions.
 (Poem 65.1–4)

There is a wide range of styles in Catullus' brief collection, making his poems a great challenge for any translator. Some of his most memorable works are written in what seems to me to be quite ordinary language. My view is that these works rise to the level of poetry—great poetry, sometimes—by the power of the thought that they convey and the fact that they fit, as though by happy coincidence, into one or another of his rigid metrical patterns. In contrast, diction that called attention to itself would

detract from the effect of the rhythm by making it seem contrived. I think that Poem 85 is the best illustration of Catullus' transformation of ordinary language into great poetry.

Odi et amo. Quare id faciam fortasse requiris.
Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

Literally: "I hate and I love. Why I do this perhaps you inquire. I do not know, but I feel it happen and I am crucified/tortured." The last word, *excrucior*, refers etymologically to crucifixion. In translating it, one is tempted to incorporate the image of a cross, either to exploit the later associations of the word or to reinforce the notion that Catullus is torn in opposite directions. Passages in which other Latin authors use *excrucio*, however, suggest that it was a faded metaphor, having about the same impact as "torment" or "torture" in English. Lucretius, for example, speaks of cold weather "crucifying" primitive humans before they discovered the use of animal-skin garments (5.1426). In cases like this, where Catullus' language seems ordinary in Latin, I have adhered to ordinary English diction, while going to great lengths to obey my own metrical rules, thus:

/ / / / /
I hate and I love. You ask me why? Who knows?
/ / /
But I feel it occur and I'm tortured.

In my opinion, for what it is worth, this approach comes closest to capturing the effect of reading Catullus' best epigrams in the original Latin.

NOTES

1. For the Latin text, see Julia H. Gaisser, *Catullus and His Renaissance Readers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 18.
2. Douglas F. S. Thomson, *Catullus: Edited with a Textual and Interpretative Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 7–8.
3. Timothy P. Wiseman, *Catullan Questions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), 51–52, identifies Apuleius' likely source as *De vita rebusque illustrium virorum* by C. Julius Hyginus. According to Wiseman, Hyginus probably arrived in Rome in 47 B.C.
4. For this author's account of what may have happened in reality, see David Mulroy, "The Early Career of P. Clodius Pulcher: A Re-Examination of the Charges of Mutiny and Sacrilege," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 118 (1988), 155–78.

5. Cicero *Pro Caelio* 32.
6. Poem 100 is addressed to a Caelius who is said to be from Verona and is described as Catullus' faithful friend. We know from the *Pro Caelio* that Caelius Rufus was from the central Italian town of Teramo. Hence the Caelius of Poem 100 is not Caelius Rufus. It seems to me that in Poem 100 Catullus emphasizes his addressee's association with Verona precisely to distinguish him from his more famous namesake. Compare R. O. A. M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets: From Catullus to Horace* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 290, note 71: "[Wiseman] points out that the Caelius of Catullus, poem 100 is hardly likely to be M. Caelius Rufus; but this does not determine the fate of the Caelius of 58, nor of the Rufus of 69 and 77."
7. One sister was known as Clodia Luculli from her marriage to the general Lucullus, which ended in divorce in 66 B.C. Another known as Tertia was married to one Q. Marcus Rex and widowed by 61 B.C. In Clodius' trial for sacrilege in 61 B.C., Lucullus testified that Clodius and his former wife had been guilty of incestuous relations. This is reported by Cicero in the *Pro Milone* (73).
8. Guy Lee, *The Poems of Catullus, Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Brief Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), xxii.
9. Timothy P. Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet and Other Roman Essays*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974), 107. Rufus' gout is also cited as evidence against his identification with M. Caelius Rufus by J. Godwin, *Catullus: The Shorter Poems, Edited with Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1999), 3; Lee, *Poems of Catullus*, xxi; and Charles Martin, *Catullus* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press), 64.
10. Evidence of the link between ancient Roman gout and lead-lined drinking vessels is discussed by Tri Giang Phan et al. "Lead Poisoning from Drinking Kombucha Tea Brewed in a Ceramic Pot," *Medical Journal of Australia* 169 (1998), 644–46, available at <http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/xmas98/phan/phan.html> (27 October 2001).
11. By combining Poems 10 and 28, we know that Catullus served in Bithynia under a propraetor named Memmius. It is a well-attested fact that one Gaius Memmius was a praetor in 58 B.C. In the normal course of events, he would govern a foreign province during the following year. Hence the assertion that Catullus spent most of 57 B.C. in Bithynia is taken to be one of the most certain facts in his biography. In Poem 46, Catullus speaks of preparing to leave Asia Minor at the beginning of a spring, which must be the spring of 56. Poems 31 and 36 both imply that he went first to Verona. It seems unlikely that he was back in Rome for Caelius' trial, which occurred early in April of 56.
12. Wiseman, *Catullan Questions*, 60.
13. J. K. Newman, *Roman Catullus and the Modification of Alexandrian Sensibility* (Hildesheim: Weidman, 1990), 49, points out that Catullus uses the term "iambic" to mean abusive verse in general, not just poems in iambic meters narrowly defined.
14. Wiseman, *Catullan Questions*, 45.
15. *Ibid.*, 45–46.
16. This means that Poem 71 was written *before* Poem 69. The manuscript order of the poems does not argue against this assumption. There are several striking instances of apparently reversed chronology in the order of Catullus' poems in the manuscripts, especially in the elegiac collection, 65 to 116. In Poem 116, for example, Catullus declares his intention to attack Gellius in verse, something he does in Poems 80, 88, 89, 90, and

91. In Poem 68, Catullus refers to the emotional conflicts stirred by Lesbia as being in the past, while these constitute a principal subject of the subsequent poems. Poem 83, in which Lesbia's husband is still alive, and the similar 92 seem to refer to a very early stage of the relationship between Catullus and Lesbia, before they had made explicit declarations.

17. Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet*, 109, fortified his position with a metrical argument. Of Catullus' hendecasyllabic poems, some have lines beginning only with spondees; some have one or two non-spondaic beginnings; still others have many. The exclusively spondaic openings are concentrated in the poems earlier in the collection, but the very first poem (presumably written last) has four non-spondees in ten lines. From this, some have inferred that Catullus' metrical practice evolved from an early state in which he used only spondees in opening lines to the relatively free use of trochees and iambs found in his late, introductory poem. Poem 46, which speaks of his return from Bithynia, is written in the early, spondaic style. Of the Lesbia poems, only Poem 5 is written in this style. Poems 2, 3, and 7 have occasional non-spondees; Poem 36 has many. Hence the indication of Catullus' metrical practice is said to be that all the Lesbia poems, with the possible exception of Poem 5, were written after Bithynia.

The argument is based on the assumption that Catullus' metrical practice evolved in a mechanical way from an absolute exclusion of initial non-spondees to their occasional use to their free use. The Lesbia poems 2, 3, and 7 have only four non-spondaic openings in forty-three lines. They may be as early as any of the poems in the collection if one merely assumes that Catullus permitted occasional exceptions to his spondaic opening rule even in his earliest work. The only Lesbia poem with a large number of non-spondaic openings is Poem 36, on the *Annals* of Volusius. Catullus' metrical practice here may have been affected by the content of the poem, in which Lesbia refers to him as the "worst of poets." Non-spondaic openings may have sounded metrically care-less. Another poem with a high percentage of non-spondaic openings is Poem 49, the address to Cicero, in which Catullus again refers to himself as the worst of poets. The line in which the phrase occurs (5) begins with an iamb: *agit pessimus omnium poeta*. In general, it does not seem convincing to use the details of Catullus' metrical practice in this regard to date his poems when the sample is so small and other variables are involved.

18. F. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1993), 282–83.
19. A. Degraasi, *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae II* (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1963), 303–4.
20. We learn from Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 1.19.2, that Metellus was given the proconsulship of one of the Gauls. *Ad Atticum* 2.20.5 clearly implies that he received Transalpine Gaul; Cicero says that Metellus is disappointed about peaceful conditions there since he was hoping for a triumph. R. T. Broughton, "More Notes on Roman Magistrates: 3. Metellus Celer's Gallic Province," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 79 (1948), 73–76, argues that Metellus had probably already resigned from the command of Transalpine Gaul when he died, but the evidence for this conclusion is not compelling. Dio (37.50.4) reports that in 60 a tribune threatened to veto Metellus' command if Metellus did not relent in his opposition to a bill assigning land to Pompey's veterans. Broughton feels that the threat was carried out, but Dio does not say that it was, even though that fact would have been relevant to his theme, namely, that Metel-

- lus was fanatical in his opposition to Pompey's legislation. Other considerations are similarly indecisive. Even if Metellus' death did not pave the way for Caesar's command, it eliminated one of the *populares'* most active opponents. It is extremely unfortunate that none of Cicero's extant letters contain any discussion of it.
21. Suetonius *Divus Julius* 22. According to Suetonius, Caesar made this statement in the senate. When someone quipped that it would be hard for a woman (like Caesar) to do this, Caesar mildly replied that Semiramis ruled Assyria and that Amazons once controlled much of Asia Minor.
 22. Most of the couplet is quoted by Seneca in *Controversiae* 7.4.7, where it is attributed to Calvus. The complete couplet appears in the scholia to Lucan (7.726), where it is mistakenly attributed to Martial, who flourished a hundred years after Pompey.
 23. Erich S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 288.
 24. John Noonan, "Mala Bestia in Catullus 69.7–8," *Classical World* 73 (1979), 155–64.
 25. Gruen, *Last Generation*, 317.
 26. *Ibid.*, 147.
 27. Cicero describes the restoration of Ptolemy by the triumvirs' representative Gabinius in *In Pisonem* 41. The assertion that Gabinius received ten thousand talents from Ptolemy is contained in the scholia Bobsiensia to Cicero's *Pro Plancio* 86.
 28. A letter from Cicero to a sickly friend who missed the games (*Ad familiares* 7.1.3) provides the only contemporary account of the event: "The last day was devoted to elephants. They filled the crowd and the mob with great admiration but no pleasure. In fact, they aroused a certain pity and the feeling that there is some sort of fellowship between that beast and the human race." Writing before A.D. 79, Pliny the Elder (8.20–21) provides a fuller description: "In Pompey's second consulship, at the dedication of the temple of Venus Victrix, twenty elephants (or seventeen as some report) fought against African warriors armed with javelins. One put up a wonderful struggle. Since his feet were wounded, he crawled on his knees towards the enemies' line. Grabbing their shields, he threw them in the air. These delighted the spectators by whirling in circles as they fell, as though they were thrown by an artist rather than a mad beast. There was another astonishing sight when an elephant was killed by a single blow. A spear struck him under the eye and reached the vital organs of the head. The elephants as a group tried to escape through the iron gates that surrounded them, which disturbed the audience. (For this reason when Caesar was dictator and planned a similar spectacle, he surrounded the arena with a moat, which the emperor Nero removed when he was adding seats for the knights.) When Pompey's elephants had lost hope of escape, they sought mercy from the crowd through incredible behavior. They begged for mercy, grieving for themselves with a kind of wailing. So great was the sorrow of the people that they forgot the general [Pompey] and the generosity that he had displayed in their honor. They rose as one, weeping and calling down curses on Pompey's head—which were soon fulfilled." Compare Dio 39.28.1.
 29. Caesar *De bello gallico* 4.4–16. Caesar does not play down the one-sided nature of the final battle. He reports that the Germans were panic-stricken by the Romans' unexpected assault: "Those who were able to seize their arms in a hurry resisted our troops for a short time and battled among the carts and wagons. The rest of the multitude of children and women (since they had left home and crossed the Rhine with all their

- people) began to flee in various directions. Caesar dispatched his cavalry in pursuit of them. When the German men heard their cries and saw their people being slaughtered, they threw down their arms, abandoned their standards, and fled from the camp. When they reached the confluence of the Meuse and the Rhine, they despaired of salvation. With a great number slain, the others cast themselves into the river and died, overcome by panic, fatigue, and the force of the river. All of our men were safe except for a very small number of wounded.”
30. Dio 39.53.2.
 31. Plutarch mentions Cato’s resolution (*Caesar* 12.3), citing one Tanusius as his source: “Tanusius says that when the senate was voting in favor of processions and sacrifices, Cato expressed the opinion that Caesar should be surrendered to the barbarians so that they could purge the city for the violation of a truce by Caesar and turn the curse against the guilty man.” Tanusius may be the real name of Catullus’ Volusius, whose *Annals* are ridiculed in Poem 36. Tanusius’ *ponderosi Annales* are mentioned by Seneca (*Epistles* 93.11) with the comment *scis . . . quid vocarentur* (“You know what they were called”), possibly a reference to Catullus’ phrase *cacata carta*, “shat-upon scroll.”
 32. *Ad familiares* 15.21.4. Cicero is explaining to his correspondent why he once sent Calvus a highly flattering letter. He refers to Calvus’ devotion to the sparse “Atticist” style of oratory that was very different from Cicero’s own: “I extolled [Calvus’] talent with greater praise than you judge could possibly have been accurate. In the first place, that was my real assessment. He was mentally sharp. He followed a certain style, which was a mistake in his judgment—which was generally one of his strong points. Still he followed the style that he liked. He had much esoteric learning but lacked force. Therefore I urged him to acquire that.”
 33. Ovid *Amores* 3.9.61–62, speaking of the recently deceased poet Tibullus: “Meet him, O learned Catullus, with ivy on youthful / temples, you and your Calvus.”
 34. Dio 38.11.4: “[Caesar] waited for a good opportunity and usually attacked in such a way that his victims were unaware of what was happening. He did not want to seem to be protecting himself against anyone but only to arrange affairs to suit himself, while arousing the least hostility. For that reason he inflicted revenge secretly and in places where one would least expect it.”
 35. Compare Godwin, *Catullus*, 13: “Catullus in fact explicitly denies that his ‘art’ has anything to do with his private life in poem 16 where he comically threatens his detractors who draw conclusions about the man from his works”; Newman, *Roman Catullus*, 66: “Scholars speak sympathetically of Catullus the victim of the aristocratic harpy, Clodia. But, in literary terms, Catullus ‘needs’ Lesbia, or his domina, to be unfaithful. . . . In Catullus’ own world, why could Septimius find an Acme, or Manlius Torquatus a Vinia, but not the poet? Those others are needed as foil. It has nothing to do with ‘real life,’ and everything to do with genre, and the persona assumed as part of that genre by the poet.” Godwin exaggerates the implications of Poem 16. There Catullus says that poets are entitled to be softer in their verse than in real life. The general principle is that certain kinds of hyperbole are characteristic of poetry. This is different from saying that it has nothing to do with real life.
 36. Godwin, *Catullus*, 15.
 37. This interpretation is not merely a product of the modern compulsion to find hidden meanings in literature. Martial (11.15) promises to give a slave “Catullus’ sparrow” in a

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context that leaves no doubt about its sexual double meaning. The interpretation was first explicitly defended by the Renaissance scholar Angelo Poliziano (see Gaisser, *Catullus and his Renaissance Readers*, 75–78). Disputes about it have continued to the present day.

38. The same kind of comment can be made about Catullus' unique Poem 63, a hymn to the goddess Cybele. The hero Attis castrates himself in an excess of madness sent by his goddess. There are some obvious analogies. In Poem 75, for example, Catullus asserts that Lesbia has destroyed his mind.
39. Newman, *Roman Catullus*, 66.
40. Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."
41. Amittai F. Aviram, *Telling Rhythm: Body and Meaning in Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
42. Martin L. West, *Greek Metre* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 22.

THE COMPLETE POETRY
OF CATULLUS



Poem 1

Whom do I give my debonair, new
pumice-polished booklet to?
You, Cornelius! You were inclined
to think that my banter amounted to something
back in the days when you summarized history 5
(the only Italian who dared) in a trio
of learned (by Jove!) and laborious volumes.
So here is a bit of a booklet, whatever
its worth. And by the way, patroness maiden,
let it outlive this one generation. 10

2. **pumice-polished:** see note on Poem 22.7–8.

3. The poem dedicates a *libellus* or “little volume” or “booklet,” possibly Poems 1–60, to **Cornelius** Nepos, a historical writer born about 100 B.C. Of his work, there survive little-read biographies of Cicero’s best friend, Atticus, and Caesar’s opponent, Cato, together with a book on the character of selected foreign leaders. He also wrote a *Chronica*, the three-volume world history to which Catullus alludes. A Cornelius is also addressed in Poem 102, in which Catullus promises to keep an unknown secret.

Poem 2

Sparrow, the special delight of my girl,
whom often she teases and holds on her lap
and pokes with the tip of her finger, provoking
counterattacks with your mordant beak,
whenever my luminous love desires 5
something or other, innocuous fun,
a bit of escape, I suppose, from her pain,
a moment of peace from her turbulent passion,
I wish I could play like she does with you
and lighten the cares of my sorrowful soul. 10
It thrills me as much as the nimble girl
in the story was thrilled by the gilded apple
that finally uncinched her virginal gown.

11. **it thrills me as much:** there is a seemingly illogical progression here from an impossible wish (“I wish I could play, etc.”) to an indicative statement (“it thrills me as much” instead of “it would thrill me as much”). This led Mynors, now Thomson, and other editors to suppose that one or more lines were omitted from the manuscript and that 11 through 13 may even belong to a separate poem. Starting in antiquity, however, many readers have sensed a sexual double entendre in this poem and the following one. If Catullus intended such ambiguity, the grammatical difficulty disappears. Catullus is thrilled when his girl plays with his “sparrow” and wishes that he could achieve the same effects by himself.

the nimble girl: Catullus refers to the myth of Atalanta, a great huntress and athlete. A hero known as Milanion or Hippomenes beat her in a race and thus won her hand by distracting her with golden apples.

Poem 3

Commence lamentation, Venuses, Cupids,
and any whose feelings are fairly refined.
Sparrow has died that belonged to my girl,
sparrow, the special delight of my girl,
a darling more precious to her than her eyes, 5
for he was a honey-sweet intimate friend,
as close to the girl as the girl to her mother,
and never removed himself from her lap,
but hippety-hopping here and there,
constantly peeped to his lady alone. 10
And now he is taking that shadowy road
from which they deny there is any return.
Evil befall you evil shades
of Orcus, you eaters of every beauty!
You’ve taken away my beautiful sparrow! 15
O monstrous crime! O piteous sparrow!
By your travail, the delicate eyes
of my girl are red and swell with tears.

14. **Orcus** was a god of the dead, the equivalent of the Greek Hades.

Poem 4

The hull you see before you, friends,
 asserts that *he* was the quickest of ships,
 and denies that any vessel afloat
 could ever get past him, whether he had
 to use his oars or fly with his linen, 5
 and denies that the menacing Adriatic's
 shore dissents, or the Cyclades islands,
 or glorious Rhodes, or the snarling Thracian
 Propontis, or rugged Pontus, where
 in days of yore the boat-to-be 10
 was a forest that crowned the Cytorian ridge,
 its garrulous foliage constantly whistling.
 Cytorus, where boxwood grows, and Amastris,
 the hull asserts these facts are known
 to you and adds that he stood at his birth 15
 atop your highest peak and plunged
 his little oars in your water, then carried
 his master through many raging straits,
 whether the wind was calling from left
 or right or Jupiter graciously blew 20
 on each of the sheets with equal insistence.
 He claims he never made a vow
 to the gods of the shore on the journey completed
 just now from the sea to this crystal pond.
 His travels are history. Aging in quiet 25
 seclusion, he offers himself to you,
 Castor the twin and the twin of Castor.

1. **the hull:** Catullus' actual term, *phaselus*, from the Greek word for a kind of "bean," designated a type of ocean-going ship. Catullus' *phaselus* may refer to the ship that carried him back from Bithynia after being manufactured on the coast of the Black Sea.

9. **Propontis . . . Pontus:** The Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea, respectively.

11. **Cytorian ridge:** Cytorus was the name of a hill and a city on the south coast of the Black Sea about 250 miles east of the Bosphorus; now Cide.

13. **Amastris:** a city about 50 miles west of Cytorus, now Amasra.
 24. **this crystal pond:** probably in Lake Garda beside Catullus' villa on Sirmio. It is not known, however, whether there was any practical way for an ocean-going boat to reach Lake Garda.
 27. **Castor** and his twin brother Pollux were friendly deities to whom sailors in distress prayed.

Poem 5

Let us live and love, my Lesbia. Here's
 a copper coin for the criticism
 of elderly men with exalted morals.
 Suns have the power to set and return.
 Our light is brief and once it fails, 5
 we have to sleep in the dark forever.
 Give me a thousand kisses, a hundred,
 another thousand, a second hundred,
 a thousand again, a hundred more
 until we ourselves lose track of the score, 10
 confusing the kissing count as a sly
 method of thwarting the evil eye.

Poem 6

Flavius, you would agree to describe
 your girl to Catullus, if she were not ugly
 and crude. In fact, you could hardly keep still.
 I infer you are lavishing love on some feverish
 whore and are just too ashamed to admit it. 5
 Silent in vain, your bedroom proclaims
 your nights are not just lonely vigils.
 One notices garlands and Syrian oils,
 a couple of cushions next to each other
 with similar indentations, the noise 10
 your wobbly bed produces when shaken.
 Nothing conceals immorality. Nothing!
 And no one achieves such a decadent slouch
 unless he's doing something stupid.

Tell us about it, so you and lover, 15
 whatever she is for better or worse,
 can ascend to the sky on my delicate verse.

1. **Flavius:** a common name. Nothing is known of Catullus' Flavius, who is mentioned only in this poem.

Poem 7

You ask how many kisses, Lesbia,
 would be enough for me or more.
 How many grains of Libyan sand
 in silphium-rich Cyrene divide
 the holy tomb of ancient Battus 5
 from the temple of equatorial Jove?
 How many stars in the still of the night
 observe the furtive loves of men?
 For you to bestow on the raging Catullus
 that number of kisses would more than suffice, 10
 some number beyond the calculation
 of curious people with evil tongues.

4–5. **silphium-rich Cyrene . . . Battus:** silphium was a flavorful herb used in food, especially cheese, and medicine. It was the chief product of Cyrene (now Shahhat), a Greek colony on the coast of Libya. Cyrene was said to have been founded in 631 B.C. by a Spartan known as Battus (“Stammerer”). The Greek poet Callimachus, one of Catullus’ chief models, was from Cyrene. Catullus refers to him as the son of Battus.

6. **equatorial Jove:** or more literally “boiling Jove,” a riddling way of referring to the Egyptian god Ammon, whose chief temple lay in the Libyan desert about 300 miles southeast of Cyrene.

Poem 8

Poor Catullus, stop playing the fool!
 Seeing that something has died, deem it dead.
 Bright were the suns that shone once for you,
 the times you followed the girl everywhere.

No girl will ever be loved more than she. 5
 Many amusing things happened then,
 things you wished and the girl never spurned.
 Suns most certainly shone bright for you.
 Now she turns her back. Do the same!
 Give up your hopeless pursuit! End your grief! 10
 Endure with a resolute mind. Steel yourself.
 Girl, Catullus has now steeled himself.
 Farewell! Rejected, he makes no appeal.
 But you'll be sorry when all courtship ends.
 What kind of life, you whore, waits for you? 15
 What man will come and sing beauty's praise?
 Whom will you love and whose girl be called?
 Whom will you kiss? For whom bite the lips?
 But you, Catullus, be firm. Steel yourself.

Poem 9

Veranius, best of all my friends,
 all my countless throng of friends,
 have you come to your home, to the gods of the larder,
 your harmonious brothers and aging mother?
 You have! Oh happy news! And I 5
 will see you in safety and hear you describe
 the people, the places, the customs of Spain,
 in your usual manner, then hug your neck
 and kiss your smiling mouth and eyes.
 Legions of experts in blessings agree: 10
 there's nothing more joyful or blessed than me!

1. **Veranius:** evidently one of Catullus' best friends. He is also mentioned in Poems 12, 28, and 47. In each of those poems he is linked with a certain Fabullus. Nothing is known of either Veranius or Fabullus except what can be inferred from Catullus' text. From Poem 12 it appears that they were in Spain together. Poems 28 and 47 imply that they served in some province under a Piso. The Piso in question could be Caesar's father-in-law, L. Calpurnius Piso, who governed Macedonia from 58 to 55 B.C. and was harshly criticized afterwards by Cicero. Fabullus and Veranius

may have served in his administration after an earlier sojourn in Spain. It is not known, however, who governed Spain between 58 and 55. Hence it is also possible that Veranius and Fabullus were there at that time under a different Piso and that this is the only foreign adventure of theirs to which Catullus refers.

Poem 10

Varus escorted me out of the forum—
 catching me idle—to visit his lover,
 a bit of a whore (as I knew at a glance)
 but not devoid of wit and charm.
 We settled ourselves and turned to various 5
 topics of conversation, including
 the state of Bithynia, how it was doing
 and whether I made a fortune there.
 I stated with candor that neither the natives
 themselves nor the praetor nor staff had a reason 10
 to promenade with shinier heads,
 especially the men on the ill-treated staff,
 whom the praetor would fuck in the mouth for a laugh.
 “Be that as it may,” they replied, “we assume
 you acquired your share of Bithynia’s national 15
 treasure: servants to carry your litter.”
 Anxious to make a grand impression
 I said, “I was hardly so down on my luck
 that merely because of my province being poor,
 I would fail to acquire a sturdy octet.” 20
 In fact, I possessed not a solo attendant
 with muscles sufficient to carry the cracked
 leg of a soldier’s cot on his back.
 Hereupon the brazen slut interjected
 the following words: “Catullus, my dear, 25
 could you lend them to me for a while, for a ride
 to Sarapis’ temple?” “Oh wait!” I replied,
 “That purchase I mentioned I made, my mind
 must have wandered. My faithful companion is Cinna,
 Gaius. He made the actual purchase. 30

Ownership is a bore to define.
 I use them as though they were legally mine.
 But you're too rude and annoying to bear,
 to make one speak with so much care!"

1. **Varus:** there are two possibilities for the historical person behind Catullus' Varus, who is also addressed in Poem 22: Alfenus Varus, a cobbler turned lawyer, possibly the Alfenus whom Catullus upbraids for ingratitude in another poem (see note on Poem 30.1) or Quintilius Varus, a slightly younger contemporary of Catullus who went on to become a leading literary critic (cp. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 438–44).

7. **Bithynia:** Roman province occupying the northwest corner of modern Turkey.

13. **praetor:** Catullus served in Bithynia under Gaius Memmius in 57/56 B.C. and complains about his experience again in Poem 28 (6–10).

27. **Sarapis:** originally an incarnation of the Egyptian deity Osiris, he was developed by the Greek rulers of Alexandria into a popular healing god with similarities to Hades, Asclepius, and Zeus. He was worshiped throughout the Greek-speaking world and in Roman Italy.

29. **Cinna:** see note on Poem 95.1.

Poem 11
To Furius and Aurelius

Catullus' comrades, wherever he goes,
 whether he reaches the Indians' realm,
 where the far-resounding eastern wave
 pummels the shore,
 visits Hyrcani, effeminate Arabs, 5
 Sacae, or Parthians laden with arrows,
 or the fields where the floods of the sevenfold Nile
 deposit their colors,
 or walks across the lofty Alps,
 seeing the achievements of Caesar the Great, 10
 the Gallic Rhine, the choppy main,
 the faraway Britons,
 ready for any adventure, whatever
 the will of heaven's inhabitants brings,

say a few words to my girl, a few
 unfriendly words. 15
 Let her live and rejoice with her band of adulterers,
 embracing three hundred at once, though truly
 loving none, and never fail
 to rupture their groins, 20
 but not rely on my love as before.
 It died by the guilt of that girl, as a flower
 falls at the edge of a meadow when touched
 by a passing plough

One of Catullus' "comrades" may be the well-known poet, **Furius** Bibaculus. **Aurelius** was a common name. Nothing is known of Catullus' Aurelius except what can be inferred from the poems in which he is mentioned. In 15 and 21, Catullus accuses him of trying to seduce his boyfriend, Juventius; in 16, he threatens Aurelius and Furius with sexual violence because they called him effeminate.

5. **Hyrcaei**: a tribe on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.

6. **Sacae**: a Scythian tribe on the steppes of southern Russia.

Parthians: a tribe that formed part of the ancient Persian empire, the Parthians became dominant in Mesopotamia in the second century B.C. In 53 B.C. they defeated Crassus' legions.

11–12. **Rhine . . . Britons**: in 55 B.C. Caesar built a bridge across the Rhine and also invaded England.

Poem 12

To Asinius Marrucinus

The use you put your left hand to,
 when people are laughing and drinking, is far
 from appealing. In fact, it is stealing—the napkins
 of negligent diners, specifically. Clever?
 You fool! It is stupid and vile. If you think 5
 I would lie, the guy to ask is Pollio,
 your brother and one who would happily pay
 a talent to cancel your thefts if he could.
 That boy is stuffed with wit and charm!
 But you! Prepare for a torrent of versified 10

insults or else—surrender the napkin!
 Its price is not what moves me so.
 It is, in fact, a souvenir,
 a Saetaban fabric Fabullus sent
 from Spain as a gift, and Veranius too. 15
 So I naturally love my napkin as well
 as I love my Fabullus and little Verany.

Asinius Marrucinus: Asinius is the name of a family that originated among the Marrucini, an Italian tribe on the Adriatic coast. Nothing is known about the Asinius addressed in the poem, except for the fame of his younger brother, Pollio (see below).

6. Gaius Asinius **Pollio** (76 B.C.–A.D. 5) was a great favorite among Rome's poets as a person and an artist, but none of his works survives. As an adult, Pollio gained fame as an orator, historian, lyric and dramatic poet, and critic. He was also active in politics, siding with Caesar during the war with Pompey and with Antony and Octavian against Caesar's assassins. He was a consul in 40 B.C. He interceded for Vergil when his family farm was confiscated to reward veterans of Philippi. In his *Fourth Eclogue*, Vergil asserts that Pollio's consulship marked the beginning of a new golden age. Horace's *Second Book of Odes* (published c. 20 B.C.) begins with a flattering address to him.

14. **a Saetaban fabric:** Saetabis (now Jativa) on Spain's Mediterranean coast was famous for its linen products in antiquity.

14–15. **Fabullus . . . Veranius:** see note on Veranius, Poem 9.1.

Poem 13

You will dine with me in style, Fabullus,
 in a couple of days, if the gods are kind
 and provided you bring a large and excellent
 dinner, a bright and beautiful girl,
 the wine, your wit, and entertainment. 5
 Bring these things, my charming friend,
 and dine in style. Catullus' purse,
 you see, is filled to the brim—with cobwebs.
 In return you will get my pure affection
 or a gift even sweeter and more refined, 10

if there *is* such a thing. You can sample the scent
 that Cupids and Venuses gave to my girl.
 A single whiff and you'll pray to the gods
 to become, Fabullus, totally nose.

1. **Fabullus:** see note on Veranius, Poem 9.1.

Poem 14

Unless I loved you more than my eyes,
 my charming Calvus, I'd hate you with hatred
 Vatinian, thanks to that gift of yours.
 What did I do? Was it something I said?
 Why would you kill me with so many poets? 5
 Some client deserves divine retribution
 for sending that heap of garbage your way.
 And yet I suspect it was Sulla the teacher
 employing an original method of payment.
 If so, I am far from displeased. *Au contraire*, 10
 I'm delighted your labors were not in vain.
 By God! It's a perfectly horrible book!
 And sent to your dear Catullus with clear
 intentions: hoping I'd die in the morning,
 the Saturnalia, best of days! 15
 You will not, I say not, get away with it, traitor.
 Assuming I live to see the dawn,
 I will instantly empty the bookstores of poison,
 Aquinus and Caesius, even Suffenus,
 and use their like to get revenge. 20
 Meanwhile, get lost, goodbye! Go back!
 Remove your evil feet from the page,
 horrible poets, banes of the age.

2. Gaius Licinus **Calvus** also figures in Poems 50, 53, and 96. Judging by these he was Catullus' best friend. Ironically, according to Pliny the Elder (7.165), he was born on the same day, 28 May 82 B.C., as M. Caelius Rufus, Catullus' rival. Calvus was a distinguished orator and poet who joined Catullus in ribald attacks on the triumvirs. Catullus commemorates the

pleasure that they took in each other's company as poets in Poem 50. As an orator, Calvus was best remembered for his juridical attacks on Vatinius, one of which is commemorated in Catullus' Poem 53.

2–3. **hatred Vatinius** refers to Calvus' prosecutions of Caesar's supporter Publius Vatinius, who is also mentioned in Poems 52 and 53. Vatinius was an energetic supporter of Caesar throughout his rise to power in the 50s. In 55 B.C., Vatinius was elected to the praetorship in the same controversial assembly that conferred consulships on Crassus and Pompey. Poem 52, in which Vatinius "swears by his consular status," was probably written at this time, since the praetorship preceded the consulship in the *cursus honorum*, the normal sequence of elected offices held by leading Roman nobles.

8. **Sulla** may be a nickname for Cornelius Epicadus, a grammarian of whom Suetonius transmits a three-sentence biography. Epicadus was Sulla's freedman and completed the dictator's memoirs when he died.

15. **Saturnalia**: the Roman winter festival in honor of Saturn; it began on December 17.

19. Catullus' **Aquinius** may be the same as the poet called Aquinius by Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations* 5.63): "I never knew a poet who did not consider himself excellent—and I knew Aquinius."

Nothing is known of **Caesius**.

Suffenus' inept poetry is the subject of Poem 22, but no poet or anyone else bearing that name is known from other sources.

Poem 14B

If some of you happen to read my foolish
verse and do not disdain to take
our scroll in hand to unwind it further . . .

At least a couple lines of this poem were omitted in the manuscript. The poem may have served as a warning to readers that the following poems are cruder than the preceding.

Poem 15

I commend myself and my love to your care
and seek a modest favor, Aurelius.
If your spirit has ever been moved by desire
for something pure and undefiled,

then please protect the boy for me, 5
 not from the crowd. I have no fear
 of the men in the street who scurry here
 and there intent on their own affairs.
 I mean protection from you and your penis,
 a menace to boys both good and bad. 10
 Deploy it as pleases! Wield it at will
 as much as you want to, anywhere else.
 “Spare only him,” is my modest request.
 But what if your evil mind and criminal
 fury provoke such a plunge into guilt 15
 that your treachery punches *me* in the face?
 I pity you then for your evil fate!
 They’ll lift your legs and open the gate
 and give you the fish-and-radishes treatment.

2. **Aurelius:** see initial note on Poem 11.

5. **the boy:** presumably Juventius. See note on Poem 24.2.

19. **the fish-and-radishes treatment:** Catullus alludes to the odd, ancient tradition that men caught in adultery or committing similar crimes were to be punished by having their buttocks singed and radishes inserted into their rectums. The principal evidence is line 1083 of Aristophanes’ *Clouds* with its scholion. When Unjust Logic argues that adultery can be justified by the example of Zeus’ affairs, Just Logic replies, “What if a person takes your advice and ends up radished and singed?” The scholiast comments: “This is how adulterers were punished. People inserted radishes into their rectums and sprinkled hot ashes on them until a sufficient degree of torment had been achieved.” The addition of fish to the recipe is mentioned only by Catullus and his fellow Roman Juvenal (10.317). Whether or how often this punishment was inflicted in reality is anybody’s guess.

Poem 16

To Aurelius and Furius

I’m going to rape you, front and back,
 you queer and you nymphomaniac.
 You think you can tell from my verse, because
 it is soft, that I must be decadent too.

Of course, a respectable life becomes 5
 a serious poet; his poems, however,
 are free, provided they have some wit
 and charm, however decadent they
 may be, and stir up an itch in their readers,
 not boys, I say, but hairy sods, 10
 nether parts of solid lead.
 You read about infinite kisses and dare
 to think my masculinity slack!
 I'm going to rape you, front and back.

Aurelius . . . Furius: see initial note on Poem 11.

2. **nymphomaniac:** a loose translation of *cinaede*, an adjective applied to sexually promiscuous men and women. The additional imputation of femininity to Furius strikes me as being within the general spirit of the poem, even though it is not entailed by *cinaede*.

Poem 17

This poem seems to be addressed to Catullus' home town of Verona, a Roman colony in the province of Cisalpine Gaul. Catullus hopes that Verona will get a new bridge as a site for a certain festival provided that an old man, who is neglecting his young wife, falls off the current bridge into the swamp below. A good number of ancient rituals were associated with bridges, but it is not known which one Catullus has in mind. No other source mentions a ritual in which priests of Mars danced on a bridge. Catullus' recommendation for his old townsman may have something to do with the obscure Roman proverb "sexagenarians off the bridge" (Festus *s.v. sexagenarios*). Though no one really knew its origin, some said it alluded to an ancient custom of throwing old men off bridges to their deaths when they reached the age of uselessness, that is, sixty (Ovid *Fasti* 5.621).

Colony, anxious to frolic the length of your bridge,
 ready to hop but afraid of the wobbly legs
 of your little old bridgey erected on second-hand splinters,
 which threatens to fall on its back and to sink in the swamp,
 I hope you acquire exactly the bridge that you want, 5
 sufficiently strong for the Salisubsilian rites,
 but do me a favor, a truly uproarious favor.
 I want a particular fellow townsman of mine

to slip from the bridge and plummet headfirst in the slime,
 head over heels, at precisely the spot where the rotten 10
 muck overlies the deepest and darkest abyss.
 The man is an absolute moron. A baby of two,
 asleep on his father's elbow, is more discerning.
 He married a virgin, a girl of the dewiest bloom.
 The delicate flock produces no daintier pet, 15
 the ripest of grapes demand less assiduous care.
 He watches her play as she pleases, not giving a damn.
 Refusing to rise on his own, he lies like a log
 in a furrow, an alder hamstrung by Ligurian ax,
 void of sensation, as though it had never existed. 20
 He's Stupor personified, totally sightless and deaf.
 "Your name?" "Do you live?" He considers these difficult questions.
 That is the fellow I'm longing to throw from your bridge.
 Perhaps it would suddenly rupture his sleepy inertia.
 Perhaps he would leave his passive soul in the mire, 25
 as a mule often loses an iron shoe in a puddle.

6. **Salisubsilian rites:** apparently a comical coinage by Catullus combining the words *Salii*, priests of Mars renowned for energetic dances and lavish banquets, and *subsilio*, "leap up."

19. **Ligurian:** Liguria corresponded to the northwestern corner of Italy, around Genoa.

Poems 18–20

In 1554 a French classicist, Marc Antoine Muret, produced an edition of Catullus that included a fragmentary address to the fertility god, Priapus, and two monologues by him at this point. The first fragment is attributed to Catullus on good authority. The metrical writer Terentianus Maurus (third century A.D.) cites its four lines as by Catullus to illustrate his use of the so-called Priapean meter, which is also the meter used by Catullus in Poem 17.

I dedicate this grove to you, Priapus,
 though Lampsacus all belongs to you, Priapus,
 for you are the god especially honored in towns
 on the shore of the Hellespont, oyster-richer than others.

2. **Lampsacus** was one of the cities on the Hellespont.

4. **oyster-richer** translates *ostreosiora*, “more full of oysters,” a comical epithet.

The two speeches by Priapus are included in the anonymous collection of short Latin poems known as the *Catalepton* and are not generally regarded as Catullan. Since the nineteenth century, editors have omitted all three of Muret’s additions but retained his numbers.

Poem 21

Aurelius, father of hungry desires,
 not current desires alone but all
 that were or are or the future will see,
 you’re openly hunting the butt of the boy
 that I love. You follow him, telling him jokes, 5
 with your arm on his shoulder, constantly probing,
 but are certain to fail, because you will suck
 on my dick before you can launch your attack.
 You know, if your belly were full, I would never
 object, but I hate to imagine your training 10
 the boy in fuckin’ thirst and starvation.
 So stop while you can in a dignified manner.
 Otherwise stop when I come in your mouth.

1. **Aurelius**: see initial note on Poem 11.

4–5. **the boy that I love**: presumably Juventius. See note on Poem 24.2.

Poem 22

To Varus

Suffenus, that fellow you know all too well,
 is a charming, ironic, urbane gentleman,
 and yet he produces the most verse by far.
 I count ten thousand works penned by him,
 and not in the usual way: palimpsest 5
 editions, but regal sheets, never used,
 rods and straps and a red parchment wrap,
 smoothed by the pumice stone, ruled with lead.

But read these works by him. Fine urbane
 Suffenus sounds like a man digging wells 10
 or milking a goat. He is so different.
 What should we make of the change? Now a wit,
 or call him whatever suggests smoother sheen,
 he is duller at once than the dull countryside
 the moment he touches verse. Yet the man 15
 is never as happy as when writing it.
 He views himself with such joy and awe.
 We are all deceived like this. No one lives
 in whom you cannot perceive some degree
 of Suffenus. Each of us lugs special faults, 20
 but strapped on the back where one never looks.

Varus: see note on Poem 10.1.

1. **Suffenus**, also mentioned in Poem 14.19, is otherwise completely unknown.

5. **palimpsest**: a Greek term meaning “rescratched” and applied to papyrus pages that were erased and reused.

7–8. **rods and straps . . . ruled with lead**: in expensively produced scrolls, the long papyrus page was wrapped around a metal rod, enclosed in a leather outer binding, and tied up with ribbons. The rough papyrus pages were sanded smooth with porous pumice stone. Guidelines for writing were created by running a narrow lead wheel across the pages.

21. **strapped on the back**: Catullus alludes to an Aesopic fable. The Roman author Phaedrus (*Fable* 75) transmits a version of it, as follows: “Jupiter placed two knapsacks on each of us. He placed one, which was filled with our own faults, behind our backs; the other, which was weighed down with the faults of others, he hung in front of our chests. For this reason we are not able to see our own faults, but as soon as others err, we turn into critics.”

Poem 23

Furius, owner of neither a slave
 nor a vault—nor a flea nor a flame nor a spider,
 you do have a father, and he has a wife,
 and both have teeth that crumble stone.

So things are fine for you and your father, 5
 and fine for your father's rickety wife.
 I mean you all have perfect health,
 perfect digestion, and nothing to fear,
 no villas that burn, no apartments collapsing,
 no poisoned wine, no thieves at night. 10
 In fact, you're a hundred percent secure!
 Your bodies, moreover, are drier than horn
 (or drier than anything drier than horn)
 from sun and cold and constant hunger.
 How could existence get any better? 15
 Saliva, perspiration, phlegm,
 disgusting nasal mucus—gone.
 Add a more elegant elegance, this:
 your butt outshines your salt tureen.
 You're lucky to launch ten turds a year, 20
 and each is as hard as a rock or a bean.
 You can smash and crumble your crap by hand
 while keeping your fingers perfectly clean!
 Furius, these are transcendent advantages.
 Don't dismiss them or think them mean. 25
 About your urgent request for a loan,
 surely you're rich enough on your own!

1. **Furius:** see initial note on Poem 11.

Poem 24

Blossom of those who bear the name
 Juventius, all who do at the present
 or have or shall in years to come,
 I wish you had given that man who owns
 neither slave nor vault King Midas' wealth 5
 rather than letting him love you so.
 "I thought he was handsome," you say and he is,
 but handsome minus slave and vault.
 Say what you will, it's a terrible fault
 not to have a slave or a vault. 10

2. **Juventius:** Catullus thus provides a name for his boyfriend. Nothing is known of the historical person behind the name, which was common in reality but could also be a pseudonym selected as a play on the word for a youth (*juvenis*). The other poems in which Juventius is mentioned are 48, 81, and 99. He evidently excited Catullus' animosity against Furius and Aurelius, the theme of Poems 15, 16, 21, and 23, and possibly caused Catullus' jealousy of Ravidus in Poem 40.

4–5. **that man who owns neither slave, etc.:** identified by Poem 23.1–2 as Furius (see initial note on Poem 11).

Poem 25

Thallus, you fairy, softer than fur on a rabbit
 or goose's down or the tip of an ear or the penis
 that hangs from a geezer's groin collecting cobwebs,
 and yet you're a greedier thief than a turbulent hurricane
 5
 return the possessions of mine that you snatched: my cloak,
 the handkerchief from Spain, and my Thynian etchings,
 things you display, you fool, like family heirlooms.
 Unglue the goods from your talons and send them back,
 or else degrading rods will leave their steaming 10
 marks on your woolly hips and dainty hands
 and make you writhe and twist like a tiny ship
 caught on the open sea by a furious wind.

1. **Thallus** is a Greek name meaning twig. Nothing further is known of Catullus' Thallus.

5. An error in the manuscript has left this line unintelligible. As transmitted it reads, "When the divine woman ram shows gaping men."

7. **Thynian etchings:** drawings from Bithynia; see note on Poem 10.7.

Poem 26

The blasts of Auster, Furius, miss
 your villa. Favonius, Apeliotes,
 Boreas skirt the estate, but it is

exposed to a draft—a quarter million.
Talk about a noxious breeze!

5

1. **Auster:** the south wind.

Furius: see initial note on Poem 11.

2. **Favonius:** the west wind, Greek Zephyr.

Apeliotes: the east wind, a Greek name derived from *apo* (from) and *helios* (sun).

3. **Boreas:** the north wind, a Greek name.

Poem 27

Boy who attends the senile Falernian,
deliver stronger goblets, please!
So rules Postumia, mistress of drinking.
No grape is quite as juicy as she.
But water, destruction of wine, recede!
Flow off to wherever! Philosophers like you.
Here Thyone's son is pure.

5

1. The **Falernian** region in Campania around the Bay of Naples was famed for its wine.

3. **Postumia** is the feminine form of a common name. Catullus' Postumia is mentioned only here.

7. **Thyone:** a name applied to Semele, mother of Bacchus, god of wine and revelry.

Poem 28

To Veranius and Fabullus

Piso's penniless retinue,
his personal comrades, how do you do?
How trim and light your satchels look!
How easy to lift. Did attending that crook
give you your fill of famine and frost?
And what were your total profits . . . lost?
My praetor was every bit as bad.
Losses were all I had to add.

5

“Memmius, how adroitly you slipped
 your dick between my complaisant lips!” 10
 You two had a similar fate, it would seem:
 stuffed by an equally powerful beam.
 “Acquire noble friends” indeed!
 Damn those men who spatter shame
 on Romulus’ and Remus’ name. 15

1. The magistrate under whom **Veranius** and **Fabullus** served may have been L. Calpurnius **Piso** (see note on Poem 9.1), who governed Macedonia in 57/56 B.C. In 59, his daughter married Julius Caesar. As consul in 58, Piso incurred Cicero’s enmity by coming out in favor of his exile. Subsequently, Cicero charged Piso with flagrant crimes in governing Macedonia (*De provinciis consularibus* 3.5–6). Catullus reverts to the theme of Piso’s mistreatment of Fabullus and Veranius in Poem 47.

9. **Memmius**: see note on Poem 10.13.

Poem 29

Who can see and accept the fact
 (except for a lowlife scumbucket pig)
 that Mamurra possesses what used to belong
 to forested Gaul and faraway Britain?
 Will you actually see and accept these facts, 5
 Romulus, fairy? Wealthy and proud,
 Mamurra explores the beds of the world
 like a dove with snowy plumes or Adonis.
 Will you watch with indifference, Romulus, fairy?
 I guess you’re a lowlife, scumbucket pig. 10
 Did you visit the Occident’s farthest isle
 with this intention, unique commander,
 to let that drooping penis of yours
 devour a billion or two sesterces?
 What else does “sinister charity” mean? 15
 Has he wasted his fortunes or feasted too little?
 He slaughtered his father’s legacy first.
 The Pontic spoil was next and the Spanish
 third, as the golden Tagus knows.

And now there's concern for Gaul and for Britain. 20
 Why do you nourish the monster? What
 can he do but suck on greasy fortunes?
 Was this your intention, finest of in-laws,
 father and son, when you leveled the world?

3. **Mamurra** was a knight from Formiae and the *praefectus fabrum* ("commander of construction workers") with Caesar in Gaul. Although he appears on the pages of Catullus only as a spendthrift with an ugly mistress named Ameana (see 41.4 and 43.5), Caesar's achievements in Gaul were made possible in part by remarkable engineering feats (e.g., a bridge of fifteen hundred feet across the Rhine, built in ten days in 55), and Mamurra had some role in these achievements. From this poem, it is inferred that Mamurra first served in a campaign in Pontus (Northern Turkey), i.e., probably in Pompey's campaign against Mithridates in 66/65, and then in Spain, i.e., probably under Caesar in 61. Poem 29 is Catullus' most famous attack on Mamurra. Suetonius (*Divus Julius* 73) reports that it embarrassed Caesar. It is also alluded to by Pliny the Elder (36.48), Quintilian (9.4.141), and the author of the *Catalepton* (3.6). Poem 57 recapitulates the themes of 29. At 29.13, Catullus refers to Mamurra as Caesar's "drooping penis" (*mentula diffututa*). Four of his elegiac poems (94, 105, 114, and 115) continue to abuse Mamurra under the name "Penis" (*mentula*). In Poem 57 we learn that Mamurra was from Formiae, an ancient town on the coast south of Rome. In 41 and 43, Catullus criticizes a certain Ameana, whom he designates as the mistress of the "Formian dead-beat," apparently another way of referring to Mamurra.

11. **the Occident's farthest isle**: a reference to Caesar's invasion of Britain in 55 B.C.

18. **Pontic spoil . . . Spanish**: from this it may be inferred that Mamurra served under Lucullus or Pompey in Asia Minor and under Caesar in Spain before accompanying the latter to Gaul.

19. **Tagus**: a river in Spain.

23–24. **finest of in-laws, father and son**: in the course of the poem, the addressee changes from Caesar alone to Caesar and Pompey. In lines 10 and 11, Catullus addresses Caesar alone, but the "yours" in line 13 and subsequent second-person verbs are plural in form in the Latin. Lines 23–24 make it clear who the additional person is, since Pompey married Caesar's daughter, Julia, in 59 B.C. Julia's death in 54 B.C. provides a *terminus ante quem*.

Poem 30

Alfenus, forgetful and false to your faithful companions,
 have you no pity at all on your sweet little friend?
 And no hesitation to trick and betray me, deceiver?
 Traitors' misdeeds displease the lords of the sky,
 a fact you neglect by abandoning me in my grief. 5
 Explain what men should do and whom believe!
 You were the one who told me to give you my soul,
 enticing my love, as though no dangers lurked,
 and now you depart, permitting the winds and airy
 clouds to scatter your worthless words and deeds. 10
 You have forgotten, but gods and Faith remember,
 and Faith guarantees that you will regret what you did.

1. The only **Alfenus** of Catullus' generation known to history was P. Alfenus Varus. Originally a cobbler in Cremona, he abandoned his shop to take up the study of law in Rome and was quite successful.

Poem 31

Sirmio, diamond of all all-but-isles
 and islands floating on clear lakes and vast
 seas, whatever each Neptune bears—
 so glad to see you again! Very glad!
 I can hardly believe I escaped Thynia 5
 and the plains adjacent and come safely back.
 What is more blessed than cares laid aside,
 when shedding the weight from our minds, drained by toil
 abroad, we arrive at our Lar's shrine and lie
 in the very bed we have long yearned to see? 10
 That alone rewards work so hard.
 Charming Sirmio, hail! Cheer your lord!
 Waves of the Lydian lake, dance and shout!
 Whatever laughs are home, let them out!

1. **Sirmio**: a peninsula on the south end of Lake Garda, an Alpine lake near Verona. Catullus' family owned a villa there.

5. **Thynia:** Bithynia; see note on Poem 10.7.

9. **Lar:** a household god. Spirits of deified ancestors, Lares were worshiped as guardian spirits in Roman houses. Typically, statues of them were placed in kitchen niches.

13. **Lydian lake:** i.e., Lake Garda. Northern Italy was settled by the Etruscans, supposed descendants of the Lydians, who flourished in Asia Minor in the sixth century B.C.

Poem 32

Be a sweetie, Ipsithilla,
 joy and charm personified,
 invite me to join in your afternoon nap.
 But merely inviting is not enough.
 Make certain that nobody locks the door. 5
 Resist your desire to wander the streets.
 Stay in the house and prepare to engage
 in nine continuous copulations.
 If this is agreeable, tell me at once.
 I'm lying on my back, digesting my lunch, 10
 and boring a hole in my tunic and cloak.

1. **Ipsithilla:** manuscripts vary on the spelling of the addressee's name, which is not found in any form in other sources.

8. **copulations:** Catullus' word *fututiones* is an abstract noun that may have been coined on the basis of the vulgar verb for intercourse, *futuo*. If so, the word may have sounded comically grandiose, a nuance captured by Gould's translation, "fuckifications."

Poem 33

O prince of thieves infesting the baths,
 Vibennius senior, and faggot son,
 O father renowned for sticky fingers,
 O son of an equally infamous butt,
 haven't you gone into banishment yet, 5
 left for some desolate region? Your thefts

are known to us, father, and nobody, son,
would give a cent for your hairy bum.

2. **Vibennius** is an uncommon name. Nothing further is known about Catullus' Vibenni.

Poem 34

A hymn honoring the goddess Diana (Greek Artemis), Apollo's sister. T. P. Wiseman, *Catullus and His World: A Reappraisal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 96–101, argues that the poem was meant to be sung at a religious occasion on the island of Delos, birthplace of Diana and Apollo, and an important commercial crossroads in Catullus' day. He may have visited it on his Bithynian journey, tending to family financial interests.

In Diana's strength secure,
we'll sing our song to her,
as becomes a chorus of pure
youths and maidens.

Child whom all revere 5
of Jove without a peer,
Latona bore you near
the Delian olive.

She meant that you would gain 10
green woods as your domain,
all mountainous terrain,
dark groves, and rivers.

To laboring mothers your name
is Lucina, but you are the same 15
as Crossroads and Luna, whose fame
is borrowed light.

Your monthly cycles divide
the course of the year. You guide
the farmer's harvest inside
his rustic buildings. 20

By any name you crave
 be blest and may you save
 Roman wealth. Behave
 as long accustomed.

1. **Diana:** the virgin goddess of the woodlands, identified with the Greek Artemis (sister of Apollo) and with Luna (Greek Selene), the moon.

7. **Latona** (Greek Leto) was the mother of Diana/Artemis and Apollo.

8. **Delian olive:** there were various myths about the birth of Diana and Apollo. The earliest account, in *Homeric Hymn* 3, has Apollo born by a palm tree on Delos shortly after his sister's birth on the nearby island of Ortygia.

14. **Lucina:** syncretism, the merging of myths, was characteristic of Greek and Roman religion from the outset. It took the form of statements that deity X was really deity Y worshiped under another name. In this hymn, Catullus asserts that three other deities are really just Diana, worshiped under other names. Lucina was a goddess of childbirth with her name derived from *lux* (light) because she brought children into the light.

15. **Crossroads and Luna:** the former title is *Trivia* in Latin, an adjective derived from *trivium*, "crossroads." Roman Trivia was identified with the Greek Hecate, an underworld goddess, associated with magic, worshiped at crossroads, and also identified with Artemis/Diana.

Poem 35

Papyrus, oblige me by urging Caecilius,
 a sensitive poet and intimate friend,
 to visit Verona, leaving the Larian
 shore and walls of Novo Como.
 I want him to hear from a friend of his 5
 and of mine particular cogitations.
 And so, if he catches my drift, he'll devour
 the road, ignoring the luminous girl
 who calls him back a thousand times,
 embraces his neck, and begs him to stay. 10
 If the talk I hear is true, she is fatally
 smitten, insanely in love with my friend.
 A fire glowed in the depths of the being

of this piteous creature the moment she read
 a draft of the “Mistress of Dindymus.” Girl 15
 more learned than Sappho’s Muse, you merit
 forbearance. Caecilius truly has given
 his “Mighty Mother” a beautiful start.

1. Suetonius’ *De grammaticis* includes the brief biography of one Q. **Caecilius** Epirota, a freedman of Cicero’s great friend and correspondent, Atticus. Caecilius was suspected of a romantic involvement with Atticus’ daughter, his student, who was married at the time to Octavian’s great general, Marcus Agrippa. He is also said to have been the first teacher to take up the study of “Vergil and other modern poets.”

3–4. **Larian shore . . . Novo Como:** the Romans called the modern Lake Como “the Larian Lake.” The city on its southern extremity, Como, was renamed *Novum Comum*, New Como, by Julius Caesar in 59 B.C. after an influx of new colonists.

15. **Mistress of Dindymus:** Dindymus was a mountain in Asia Minor sacred to the goddess Cybele. Caecilius’ poem, like Catullus’ Poem 63, must have told a story about the goddess.

18. **Mighty Mother:** another way of referring to Cybele.

Poem 36

Volusian *Annals*, shat-upon scroll,
 fulfill a vow my girlfriend made.
 She solemnly swore to sacred Venus
 and Cupid, if I returned to her
 and stopped my savage iambic attacks, 5
 to offer selected works of the world’s
 sorriest poet to clubfooted Vulcan,
 consign them to flames and barren logs.
 The sorriest girl in the world considered
 this vow to the gods a clever joke. 10
 So lady conceived on the azure main,
 goddess who cherishes holy Idalium,
 conspicuous Urii, Ancon, and Cnidus,
 where reeds are abundant, Golgi, and Amathus,
 Durrachium, inn of the Adriatic, 15

pronounce the vow discharged in full,
 unless, of course, this prayer offends.
 Enter the flames in the interim, reeking
 of farms and failed attempts to be droll,
 Volusian *Annals*, shat upon scroll. 20

1. **Volusian *Annals*:** or the *Annals* of Volusius, an unknown poet and work.

12–15. **goddess who cherishes . . . Idalium, . . . Urii, Ancon, . . . Cnidus, . . . Golgi, . . . Amathus, . . . Durrachium:** the goddess is Venus. Idalium, Amathus, and Golgi were centers of her worship on Cyprus. Cnidus, on the coast of modern Turkey, was the site of a famous statue of her by Praxiteles. Urii, Ancon, and Durrachium, cities on the Adriatic, lack strong connections with Venus but are likely ports of call for a person returning to Northern Italy from Asia Minor. On this basis, Wiseman, *Catullan Questions*, 42–45, argues that the poem refers to Catullus' return from Bithynia.

Poem 37

Horny saloon and its snug clientele,
 pillar nine from the twins wearing caps,
 you think that you alone dangle dicks
 and have the right to fuck all the girls
 and consider other men good as goats? 5
 A hundred or two of you sit side by side
 and foolishly doubt I would dare violate
 the mouths of sitters two hundred strong.
 Believe it! In fact, I'll paint penises
 across your entire saloon's grand facade. 10
 A girl who fled my arms, once my girl,
 loved in a way no girl ever was,
 for the sake of whom I fought mighty wars,
 —she joins the crowd, and the crowd loves her too,
 not just the rich and the good (shame enough) 15
 but every low-life sex fiend in town.
 And the pack is led by you, hairy fop,
 son of Celtic Spain, rabbit land,

Egnatius, proud of your dark, black goatee
and teeth of Iberian sheen, brushed in piss. 20

2. **pillar nine from the twins wearing caps:** the “twins wearing caps” were Castor and Pollux, whose temple was situated in the forum at the foot of the Palatine hill. Castor and Pollux were represented with felt beanies worn as symbols of liberation, e.g., by former slaves who had just been freed. “Pillar nine” is a street address in effect.

9. **paint penises:** the meaning of the word translated as “penises” (*sopionēs*) is not really known. Whatever it means, the gist of the threat is obscure.

19. Catullus’ **Egnatius** is possibly to be identified with a didactic poet mentioned by Macrobius (6.5.2 and 12) as the author of an Epicurean *De Rerum Natura*, i.e., a forerunner or imitation of Lucretius’ great poem.

Poem 38
To Cornificius

Things are bad for your Catullus,
bad, by Hercules, full of toil
and worse with every day and hour.
And what have you written to comfort me,
the smallest and easiest thing to do? 5
I seethe. Is this how you treat my love?
Any condolence to lighten my grief—
in the style of Simonides: tearful and brief.

In *Tristia* 2.435, Ovid lists a **Cornificius** with Catullus, Calvus, and Cinna as a prominent modern poet.

8. **Simonides:** a major poet who flourished in Athens around the time of the Persian Wars and was the master of concision and melancholy sentiment. The Latin, *maestius Simonideis lacrimis*, is puzzling. It may mean “sadder than Simonidean tears,” but since Simonides was a past master of melancholy verse, this seems like an extravagant request, not the simple one that Catullus claims to be making. Hence I have interpreted the phrase as meaning “rather sad with Simonidean tears,” i.e., being in the style of Simonides.

Poem 39

Egnatius always smiles, everywhere,
 because his teeth are white. Go to court.
 When the lawyer is trying to make jurors weep,
 he smiles. At an only son's blazing pyre,
 when the grieving mother's sobs fill the air, 5
 he smiles. At every event, never mind
 the time or place, he smiles. That is his
 disease and not, I think, suave or smart.
 Good Egnatius, heed prudent words.
 If you were a native of Rome, Sabine land, 10
 or Tibur, the Umbrian hills' thrifty son,
 a fat Etruscan, or dark, toothy child
 of Lanuvium, one of my own northerners,
 —from any tribe with teeth cleanly cleaned,
 still I would argue against constant smiles, 15
 for nothing is worse than a smile out of place.
 But *you* are from Spain. In Spain's countryside,
 it is normal to use what one urinates
 to polish his teeth and red gums at dawn.
 And so the brighter your teeth shine, the more 20
 they loudly declare how much piss you drank.

1. **Egnatius:** see note on Poem 37.19.

10. **Sabine land:** the Sabines were an Italian tribe occupying the Apennines northeast of Rome.

11. **Tibur:** a city on the Anio River in the Sabine hills, modern Tivoli.

Umbria: region of Italy northeast of Rome, on the Adriatic coast.

13. **Lanuvium:** an ancient town in the Alban hills a few miles south of Rome.

Poem 40

What mental disorder, lamentable Ravidus,
 makes you brave my bitter verse?
 What god annoyed by a flawed invocation
 prepares to start a furious brawl?

You want your name on vulgar tongues? 5
 Long to be famous whatever it takes?
 Congratulations! For choosing to love
 my love, the punishment lasts and lasts.

1. Nothing further is known of Catullus' **Ravidus**, whose name is unusual. Catullus' language suggests that he was a rival for Juventius' affection. Elsewhere he uses the expression "my love" (*meos amores*) of Juventius, not Lesbia.

Poem 41

The girl Ameana, a veteran whore,
 thinks she can charge ten thousand sesterces,
 the girl who sports that hideous nose,
 the Formian deadbeat's female companion.
 Neighbors and kinsmen who care for the girl, 5
 summon her friends and physicians together!
 She's out of her mind and not inclined
 to consult the image-producing bronze.

1. **Ameana** is unknown from other sources but also appears in Poem 43 and bears a family resemblance to Catullus' unnamed antagonist in Poem 42.
 4. **Formian deadbeat**: Mamurra; see note on Poem 29.3

Poem 42

Forward, hendecasyllables, charge,
 whatever your number, wherever you are!
 A filthy slut is taunting me!
 She claims she doesn't intend to return
 your tablets to me—if you can believe it! 5
 Pursue and attack, demanding them back.
 How do you know who she is? She wiggles
 obscenely. Has an annoying, theatrical
 laugh and teeth that a hound would envy.
 Surrounding this woman, demand them back. 10
 "Return the tablets, filthy slut!"

The tablets, filthy slut, return!
 Unmoved? You slime! You house of shame!
 You anything-else-even-more-disgusting!"
 But not even that is doing the job. 15
 Let's try again. At least elicit
 a blush from her brazen canine face.
 So here we go in a louder voice:
 "Return the tablets, filthy slut!
 The tablets, filthy slut, return!" 20
 Nothing is happening, nothing at all.
 We need to change our basic approach
 for you verses to have a better effect.
 "Ah chaste and pure, the tablets please!"

Poem 43

Girl with a nose not too petite,
 a foot unfair, unebony eyes,
 untapering fingers, mouth undry,
 and a not abnormally elegant tongue,
 friend of the Formian deadbeat, hail! 5
 The province says that *you're* a beauty?
 Asks if Lesbia matches *you*?
 O age devoid of intelligent taste!

5. **Formian deadbeat:** Mamurra; see note on Poem 29.3.

Poem 44

My "Tiburtan estate" or else "Sabine farm"—
 the former is said by folks not intent
 on wounding Catullus, while those hating him
 say it is Sabine and use any proof—
 Tiburtan or Sabine estate, either way, 5
 I was recently pleased to pass time in your
 suburban villa to cure coughing fits
 that my throat inflicted on me, undeserved.
 I was trying at the time to get rich buffets.

Hoping to join the group Sestius 10
 invited, I read his speech, full of rot
 and venom, against the aggrieved Antius.
 A cold and frequent cough shook me then
 without interruption until fleeing to you
 I cured myself with rest, eating thorns. 15
 Recovered, therefore, I give greatest thanks
 to you for treating my sin leniently.
 If I ever accept those vile works of his
 again, do not be kind. Send a cold
 and fits of coughing—no! not to me, 20
 but to him for making his guests read his trash.

1. **Tiburtan:** near or in Tibur (modern Tivoli), a mountain town on the outskirts of Rome and a more fashionable address than the surrounding **Sabine** district.

10. Publius **Sestius** spearheaded the campaign to recall Cicero from exile and was later defended by the grateful orator in an extant speech, *Pro Sestio*.

12. **the aggrieved Antius:** literally, “the seeker (*petitor*) Antius.” Depending on context, *petitor* could denote a candidate for office or (as I have interpreted it) the plaintiff in a legal action. A certain Gaius Antius Restio was remembered for authoring a sumptuary law that restricted the rights of magistrates to dine out. According to Macrobius (3.17.13), Antius scrupulously observed his own law for the rest of his life, even though it was disregarded by others. Catullus’ poem shows that Sestius was an extravagant host, which makes Antius Restio a likely enough candidate for his adversary.

Poem 45

Septimius holding his darling love
 on his lap, his Acme, exclaims, “My Acme,
 unless I love to wrack and ruin
 and plan to do so evermore,
 as much as any desperate lover, 5
 strand me in Libya’s heat or India
 face to face with a glaring lion.”

Hearing this declaration Cupid
sneezes blessings left and right.
Acme bends her neck to kiss 10
her darling boy's intoxicated
eyes with her crimson lips and says:
"My life, my little Septimillus,
we must submit to our only lord,
for the flame that glows in my delicate marrow 15
is greater and hotter than yours by far."
Hearing this declaration Cupid
sneezes blessings left and right.
Their journey begun with favorable omens,
they love, are loved, their passions are mutual. 20
To poor Septimius, Acme seems
to humble the beauties of Britain and Syria.
Only Septimius stirs the desire
and crowns the joys of loyal Acme.
Has anyone ever seen a pair 25
of happier people, a luckier love?

1. **Septimius** is a common name. Nothing further is known of Catullus' Septimius.

2. **Acme**: the Greek word for high point was also used as a feminine proper name. Its bearer was presumably a freed woman.

Poem 46

Now spring brings back its melting warmth;
now heaven's equinoctial fury
subsides in Zephyr's pleasant breeze.
Abandon the Phrygian fields, Catullus,
and the fertile plain of hot Nicaea. 5
Let's fly to the famous cities of Asia!
Now our minds are ready to wander,
our very feet are restless and strong.
Farewell to your sweet companionship, friends.
We left on our distant journey together; 10
various roads are taking us back.

4. **Phrygia**, an ancient kingdom in central Turkey, was used poetically for all of modern Turkey.
5. **Nicaea**: a principal city in Bithynia where Catullus seems to have served under Memmius in 57/56 B.C.
6. **Asia**: not the far east but the Roman province encompassing most of modern Turkey.

Poem 47

To Socraton and Porcius

Piso's assistants, his virtual hands,
 (and both of them left), Sir Itch and Sir Hunger—
 that rosy-tipped Priapus prefers
 you two to Fabullus and little Verany?
 Do you spend entire days at costly, 5
 elegant feasts while my companions
 solicit meals at intersections?

Socraton: in his denunciation of Piso, Cicero refers to Piso's friendship with a Hellenized Syrian named Philodemus, an influential poet, critic, and Epicurean philosopher. Socraton may be a nickname for Philodemus, a play on Socrates' name as a symbol of Greek philosophy.

One C. **Porcius** Cato may be the other addressee. Unlike his more famous namesake, M. Porcius Cato Uticensis, this Porcius joined Caesar's faction in the early 50s. As a tribune, he and a colleague named Nonius Sufenas (see note on Poem 52.2) helped Crassus and Pompey win the consulship for 55.

1. **Piso**: see note on Poem 28.1.
3. **Priapus** was a horticultural deity whose statues were placed in gardens. He is depicted as having a ridiculously large, erect phallus.

The Latin word that I have translated "**rosy-tipped**" is *verpus*. It denotes a male with the tip of his penis exposed because of circumcision or erection.

4. **Fabullus . . . Verany**: see note on Veranius at Poem 9.1.

Poem 48

If somebody gave me permission, Juventius,
 to cover with kisses your honeyed eyes,
 I'd kiss three hundred thousand times
 and never approach the point of satiety,
 not if the yield of our osculation 5
 were thicker than billowing waves of grain.

Poem 49

To Marcus Tullius Cicero

Most fluent of all of the children of Romulus,
 all existing presently
 or that lived in the past or the future will see,
 accept the greatest of thanks from me,
 worst of all of the poets, Catullus— 5
 of poets the worst to the same degree
 that you are patrons' apogee.

Poem 50

Licinius, yesterday with nothing
 to do and determined to live for pleasure,
 we found amusement amply supplied
 by my writing tablets. Assisted by laughter
 and wine, we each invented matching 5
 snatches of verse in various meters.
 I left our encounter in flames, Licinius,
 from your incandescent wit and charm.
 Food did nothing to lighten my misery;
 sleep refused to quiet my eyes. 10
 Out of control, insane, I rolled
 around on my bed, awaiting the dawn,
 yearning to talk and to be with you.
 Finally, exhausted from twisting and turning,
 more dead than alive on my couch, I composed 15

this poem for you, my charming friend,
 in the hope of your understanding my pain.
 Beware of being proud, beloved. Pray,
 beware of ignoring my supplications.
 Nemesis punishes such behavior. 20
 Beware of offending that vehement goddess.

1. **Licinius** Calvus: see note on Poem 14.2.

20. **Nemesis**: Greek for vengeance or retribution, here personified as a goddess.

Poem 51

To me the man who happens to sit
 opposite you is a peer of the gods,
 he surpasses the gods (if that may be said)
 as he gazes and hangs
 on your honeyed laugh. The experience strips 5
 my senses, leaving me helpless. Lesbia,
 the moment I see you, nothing remains . . .

 Paralysis seizes my tongue, a gentle
 fire invades my arms and my legs, 10
 my ears are ringing, my lights immersed
 in a double night.
 Leisure, Catullus, that is your problem.
 From leisure derive your madness and passion.
 Leisure has toppled kings in the past 15
 and flourishing cities.

The last line of the second stanza was apparently lost by scribal error. The first three stanzas are a translation of an extant poem by Sappho (Lobel and Page, 31):

To me the man who happens to sit
 opposite you is a peer of the gods
 as bending close he listens and replies
 to your honeyed voice

and fetching laughter. Such exchange
sets the heart in my chest aflutter.
When I see you for even a moment, my voice
 fails me completely.
My tongue is broken. A gentle fire
instantly courses beneath my skin.
No vision is left in my eyes. A whirring
 fills my ears.
Chilly perspiration flows. A palsy
shakes my entire frame. I grow
paler than grass and feel as though
 I have nearly died.

Whereas Sappho's catalog of symptoms consumes four entire stanzas, Catullus breaks his off after three to express a general feeling of chagrin at his emotional state. His change of mood is so abrupt that some scholars have argued that his fourth stanza is the remnant of an entirely different poem.

Poem 52

What is your reason for living, Catullus?
Scrofulous Nonius sits on a throne.
Vatinius swears by his consular status.
What is your reason for living, Catullus?

2. **Nonius** may be one M. Nonius Sufenas, a tribune who, with C. Porcius Cato, facilitated the election of Pompey and Crassus to the consulship for 55.

throne: literally, a "curule chair," an ornate chair used by magistrates and especially associated with the relatively low-ranking aediles, who supervised public works. It is possible that Nonius held this office in 54 B.C.

3. **Vatinius . . . consular status:** Vatinius was elected to a praetorship in 55 B.C. and expected to be a consul, the next highest office, in the near future, but was disappointed.

Poem 53

I had to laugh when a man from the crowd
 that had gathered to listen to Calvus explain
 in his marvelous style how Vatinius sinned
 lifted his hands in amazement and cried:
 “My god, that little prick can talk!”

5

2. **Calvus:** see note on Poem 14.2.
3. **Vatinius:** see note on Poem 14.2–3.

Poem 54

Otho’s head is truly minute,
 he rarely washes his rustic legs,
 and Libo’s intestinal gas is exquisite.
 These features at least, I hope, displease
 you and that reheated geezer Fuficius.
 About to explode at my undeserving
 iambs again, unique commander?

5

1. **Otho:** a fairly unusual cognomen. L. Roscius Otho is remembered for sponsoring a controversial law that gave knights preferential seating in the theater, but nothing is known about his political activities at this period—or the size of his head.
2. **he rarely washes:** line 2 is corrupt. As transmitted, it is unmetrical and reads, “And, O rustic, the master’s legs are half-washed.”
3. L. Scribonius **Libo** was closely allied with Pompey in the 50s. His daughter married Pompey’s son.
5. Dio (48.22.1) says that C. **Fuficius** Fango was a veteran of Caesar’s army who entered the senate because of Caesar’s influence.
7. **unique commander:** Caesar; cp. 29.12.

Poem 55

If it’s not too much of a bother, disclose
 the shady location in which you lurk.

We've scouted the smaller field of Mars,
 the Circus, and all of the booksellers' shelves,
 even the sacred temple of Jove. 5
 My friend, I badgered all the babes
 in Magnus' portico, used direct
 intimidation to pierce their blank expressions.
 [Several words are corrupt.] . . . I shouted:
 "Surrender Camerius, evil girls!" 10
 One of them, baring her bosom, said,
 "He's hid between my rosy tits."
 Here's a labor of Hercules: *you!*
 Do you spurn my request with such arrogance, friend?
 Just tell me where you're going to be! 15
 Boldly entrust yourself to the light!
 Do you lie in a milky smooth embrace?
 By shutting your mouth and holding your tongue
 you waste the finest fruits of love.
 Venus is talkative, fond of speech. 20
 Still bolt your throat if you really want to—
 provided you share your secret with me!

3. **smaller field of Mars:** *Campus minor* ("the smaller field") in Latin. The place to which Catullus refers is unknown. The field in Rome was the *campus Martius* ("the field of Mars"), a low-lying area on the banks of the Tiber outside the city walls used for assemblies and recreation.

4. **the Circus:** the Circus Maximus, the site of chariot races on the south side of the Palatine Hill.

7. **Magnus' portico:** a reference to a portico adjoining the theater that Pompey dedicated in 55 B.C.

10. Nothing is known about Catullus' **Camerius**, who is also addressed in Poem 58B.

Poem 56

What an amusing incident, Cato,
 worthy of ears and a cackle like yours!
 By laughing show love for Catullus, Cato.
 This incident's really too funny to bear.

I happened to catch a slave who belongs 5
to my girl jerking off! I slew him, so help me,
Dione! And guess what I used for a spear!

1. There are two strong contenders to be the **Cato** addressed in this poem. The more famous is Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis, who was the triumvirs' staunchest opponent during the 50s. Throughout his career, he made a display of practicing old fashioned Republican virtues and propriety. He is an incongruous addressee for Poem 56, but that may be the point. The other possibility is Valerius Cato, a teacher and poet who seems to have been an influential figure in Catullus' circle.

7. **Dione**: the mother of Venus.

Poem 57

A beautiful harmony binds those detestable
perverts, that fairy Mamurra and Caesar.
No wonder. They carry a similar stamp,
permanent stains that nothing removes,
Formian, one, and the other is urban. 5
Little twins with the same disease,
equally eager lying on a couch,
tied in their appetites for adultery,
and graciously vying for virgins—a beautiful
harmony binds those detestable perverts. 10

2. **Mamurra**: see note on Poem 29.3.

4. **permanent stains**: it is not clear to what this refers.

5. **Formian**: see note on Poem 29.3.

Poem 58

To Caelius

A friend of ours by the name of Lesbia,
that Lesbia loved by Catullus more
than he loved himself or all of his kin,
is now to be found in the alleys and crossroads,
skinning the heirs of magnanimous Remus. 5

5. **skinning:** the Latin verb is *glubit*. As a horticultural term, it refers to peeling bark from a branch. In the sexual realm, it may have to do with exposing the tip of an uncircumcised penis.

Poem 58B

Suppose I became the Cretans' custodian,
 or took to the skies, supported by Pegasus,
 was Ladas or Perseus (wings on my feet)
 or the snowy team that Rhesus steered.
 Add to the catalog creatures of flight. 5
 And while you're about it, capture the winds
 and give them to me, Camerius, bound,
 I would still be fatigued to the depth of my being,
 consumed to the bones by total exhaustion,
 from searching the city for you, my friend. 10

1. **Cretans' custodian:** an allusion to a mythical bronze giant named Talus who patrolled the coast of Crete, walking around it three times a day, and was finally undone by Medea's magic in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (4.1638).

2. **Pegasus:** the flying horse, child of Medusa and Poseidon, tamed and ridden by Bellerophon.

3. **Ladas:** a proverbially fast runner from Sparta.

Perseus: heroic son of Zeus and Danae, he borrowed Hermes' winged sandals in order to travel to the land of the Hyperboreans to decapitate Medusa.

4. **Rhesus:** a Thracian king who is killed in Book 10 of the *Iliad* by Diomedes and Odysseus in a nocturnal raid. His claim to fame was a team of white horses, which the Greeks stole.

7. **Camerius:** the elusive, unknown individual who is also missing in Poem 55.

Poem 59

Rufa the Bolognese sucks Rufulus.
 I mean Menenus' wife, often seen
 lurking among the graves, grabbing food.

She dives when loaves of bread fall from pyres
and braves the squalid corpse-burner's blows. 5

1. **Rufa**, like its male counterpart Rufus, was a common cognomen; nothing is known of Catullus' Rufa.

Rufulus: "little Rufus."

2. **Menenus** is a family name whose bearers were prominent in the early Republic but not subsequently.

Poem 60

Were you born of a lion who ranged Libya's hills
or a Scylla whose nethermost parts howled and barked
to be ruled by such a foul, callous mind
that you would despise the last humble word
of a dying suppliant, hard-hearted one? 5

2. **Scylla**: the six-headed, man-eating monster of the *Odyssey* (12.234–59). She occupies the cliffs on one side of a perilous channel. On the other side lurks Charybdis, a whirlpool that swallows whole ships. According to Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14.51–67, Scylla was originally a beautiful nymph, but she was transformed, from the waist down, into a many-headed monster by the jealous Circe.

Poem 61

A wedding hymn in which Hymen, the god of weddings, is summoned to escort the bride to her new husband's house and the marriage chamber in which the groom awaits.

Inhabiting Helicon's height,
O child of Urania's race,
who takes the tender slip
of a girl for a man's embrace,
O Hymen Hymenaeus, 5
assume the veil with a smile,
and draping your brow with sweet
marjoram, enter the house,

protecting your snowy feet
 with yellow slippers. 10
 Our chorus needs you to raise
 your voice on this festive day.
 Ring out a nuptial hymn!
 Kick the ground, and spray
 the torch's embers! 15
 For Vinia, virtuous maiden,
 as lovely as Venus when led
 from Cyprus to Phrygia's judge,
 and Mallius are to be wed.
 The omens are favorable. 20
 She shines like Asian myrtle
 when blossoms first renew
 the twigs that hamadryads
 nurse with drops of dew
 for their amusement. 25
 Hurry and make your appearance!
 Abandon the Thespian hills,
 vacating the caves the frigid
 nymph Aganippe chills
 high in the mountains. 30
 Bring the house a mistress
 who is yearning for marriage. Entwine
 her heart with a passionate love
 like a tree that a clinging vine
 covers completely. 35
 Likewise immaculate virgins,
 for whom a similar day
 approaches, join the chorus,
 and chanting in rhythm say,
 "Hymen Hymenaeus." 40
 He brings us Venus the good
 and loving conjugation
 and hearing himself being called
 to his job will arrive at his station
 even more gladly. 45
 And who is better invoked

by those who are loved or love?
 Whom should men prefer
 of all the gods above?
 Hymen Hymenaeus! 50
 Parents send you prayers,
 for you young brides unlatch
 their belts, and newly wedded
 husbands strain to catch
 the sound of your footsteps. 55
 You surrender a tender blossom,
 a girl who is still a child,
 fresh from her mother's lap,
 to the hands of a youth gone wild.
 O Hymen Hymenaeus. 60
 In none of the joys that fame
 approves can Venus share
 unless she has your blessing.
 Would anybody dare
 to be matched with this god? 65
 Unless it has your blessing
 no house can have an heir,
 no child support a parent.
 Would anybody dare
 to be matched with this god? 70
 A land that lacks your sacred
 rites will soon despair
 of finding men to guard
 its borders. Who would dare
 to be matched with this god? 75
 Open the doors. The maiden
 is here. Do you see how the torches
 shake their splendid locks!
 [Four lines, 79–82, are missing.]
 Restrained by her natural modesty,
 a virtue she heeds to excess,
 she weeps at our summons. 85
 Don't cry, Aurunculeia!
 Be assured the light of day

was not observed by a lovelier
 woman on its way
 from the Ocean's shore. 90
 You resemble a hyacinth blossom,
 the kind that grows inside
 a rich man's various garden.
 But day's departing! O bride,
 it's time to appear. 95
 O bride, it's time to appear,
 if you take our words as guide.
 Do you see the torches shake
 their fiery tresses? O bride,
 it's time to appear. 100
 Your husband isn't fickle.
 He'll never give his heart
 to an evil femme fatale
 or choose to sleep apart
 from your delicate breasts. 105
 As trees are slowly covered
 by vines, he too will hide
 himself within your arms;
 but the day's departing. Bride,
 it's time to appear. 110
 [*Only a few words of
 the next stanza, lines 111–15, survive.*]
 How great the joys in store
 for your lord at eventide!
 How great the joys at noon!
 But the day's departing. Bride,
 its time to appear. 120
 Here comes the veil of red!
 Now let the torches glow.
 Sing together, boys!
 Hymenaeus, ho!
 Hymen Hymenaeus. 125
 Rude Fescennines erupt!
 When he hears that love is cold,
 the serving boy our lord
 once loved must not withhold

his nuts from the boys.	130
Lazy little slave,	
who shared the master's bed,	
you've played enough, now serve	
Talasio instead!	
Give up your nuts!	135
You despised the steward's wife	
before you had to shave,	
a day or two ago.	
Little bedroom slave,	
give up your nuts.	140
O perfumed groom, the gossips	
say you don't forego	
beardless boys. You better!	
Hymenaeus, ho!	
Hymen Hymenaeus.	145
We know your joys are all	
legal, but even so,	
they're not approved for husbands.	
Hymenaeus, ho!	
Hymen Hymenaeus.	150
O bride, whatever asked,	
beware of saying no.	
He might go ask another!	
Hymenaeus, ho!	
Hymen Hymenaeus.	155
What a wealthy house	
your husband shall bestow!	
Let it be your servant,	
Hymenaeus, ho!	
Hymen Hymenaeus,	160
until the bobbing head	
of age, as white as snow,	
assents to everything.	
Hymenaeus, ho!	
Hymen Hymenaeus.	165
Lift a lucky foot	
and bend your head below	
the doorway's polished lintel.	

Hymenaeus, ho!
 Hymen Hymenaeus. 170
 Aboard his crimson couch,
 your husband's features show
 he's fixed on you intently.
 Hymenaeus, ho!
 Hymen Hymenaeus. 175
 A fire eats his heart
 no less than yours, although
 he does conceal it better.
 Hymenaeus, ho!
 Hymen Hymenaeus. 180
 Enter your husband's room.
 Young gentleman, let go
 the virgin's slender arm.
 Hymenaeus, ho!
 Hymen Hymenaeus. 185
 Worthy wives of elders,
 whose virtues we all know,
 put the girl in bed!
 Hymenaeus, ho!
 Hymen Hymenaeus. 190
 Your wife is waiting, husband,
 waiting in your room,
 her face as bright as white
 chrysanthemums in bloom
 or yellow poppies. 195
 So help me, groom, in looks
 you are your woman's peer,
 and clearly loved of Venus.
 But come! We're getting near
 the end of the day. 200
 No long delay was there!
 For showing how you feel
 your love is dear to Venus,
 because you don't conceal
 your virtuous passion. 205
 The man who wants to count
 the games that will fill your nights

should first attempt to number
 heaven's shining lights
 or Africa's sands. 210
 Play as you like but soon
 produce a noble brood.
 An ancient name needs heirs
 and needs to be renewed
 from proper stock. 215
 I want a small Torquatus
 to lift his infantile
 hands from mother's lap,
 part his lips and smile
 sweetly at father. 220
 When he says his father's name
 may none suspect a lie.
 Let strangers recognize him
 and his features testify
 to his mother's virtue. 225
 As Telemachus owed to the best
 of mothers his singular fame,
 let this infant rest
 secure in his family name
 because of his mother. 230
 Virgins, bolt the doors.
 Our games are finished. Good
 couples, enjoy the powers
 of man- and womanhood
 with faithful devotion. 225

1. **Helicon:** a mountain in Boeotia, overlooking the Gulf of Corinth, and sacred to Apollo and the Muses.

2. Hymen was the son of Apollo and **Urania**, the Muse of astronomy.

5. **Hymen** was originally a personification of the wedding hymn, taking his name from the Greek *hymnos* ("hymn"). The English word, hymen, is from an unrelated Greek word meaning membrane.

Hymenaeus is just the adjectival form of his name, as though one were to refer to a "Smithian Smith."

6–10. **Veil . . . slippers:** an androgynous god, Hymen dresses like a bride, wearing a brightly colored veil and slippers.

16. **Vinia:** nothing is known of the bride except for her name, and even that is obscure. The manuscripts have *Iunia* or *Vinia* here and *Aurunculeia* in 86. All of these are family names, as though she were a Smith-Jones. According to C. Neudling, *A Prosopography to Catullus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 185, however, there are no other clear examples of noble women of the Republic known by two family names. Following Ronald Syme, he suggested that the bride is called “Vibia,” a well-attested praenomen.

18. **Phrygia’s judge:** Paris of Troy, who awarded the golden apple of Discord to Venus. The Trojans are often referred to loosely as Phrygians, a neighboring people (see note on Poem 46.4).

19. **Mallius:** the groom is a man known to history as L. Manlius Torquatus. Catullus called him Mallius, apparently an acceptable variant, which I have kept since it may be relevant to the interpretation of Poem 68 (see head note). Born about 89 B.C., Torquatus began his public life in 66 when he helped convict of bribery the men who had just beaten his father in a consular election. Father and son were loyal to the *optimae* faction throughout their careers. Cicero made the younger Torquatus, who apparently espoused Epicurean philosophy, the spokesman for that point of view in his philosophical dialogue *De finibus*. Torquatus was one of the Roman nobles listed by Pliny the Younger as dabbling in erotic verse (5.3.5). 27–29. **Thespian hills . . . Aganippe:** the Boeotian town of Thespieae lay at the foot of Mt. Helicon, which is thus denoted by “Thespian hills.” Aganippe was the name both of a spring on Helicon and of the resident nymph.

86. **Aurunculeia:** see note on Vinia at line 16.

126. **Fescennines** were extemporaneous, abusive, but good-natured verses sung by peasants at weddings and other celebrations. The name was explained in antiquity either as derived from the ancient town of Fescennium, where the custom supposedly originated, or from the word *fascinum*, which denoted an amulet in the shape of a phallus.

128. **serving boy:** *concubinus*, in Latin, a slave with whom the groom is said to have had a pederastic relationship, which will be ended by the latter’s marriage. The accusation may be an example of a rude Fescennine joke.

130. **nuts:** the groom or his attendant traditionally scattered nuts among bystanders at a wedding. Commenting on Vergil, *Eclogues* 8.29, Servius offers several explanations for the custom, showing that its actual origin was unknown. Most relevant is his remark that slave boys who had outgrown the job of concubine signified their retirement by throwing away the nuts

that they had kept as childish playthings, but this may have been inferred from Catullus' text rather than representing independent information.

134. **Talasio**: a Roman wedding god whose name was derived from a traditional cheer at weddings. Livy transmits an explanation of the cheer's origin (1.9.12). When the early Romans were planning the rape of the Sabine women, an influential senator named Talasius instructed his servants to abduct an especially beautiful Sabine for him. As the servants were carrying the girl toward his house, they warned others to leave her alone by shouting, *Talasio!* ("for Talasius").

226. **Telemachus** was the only son of Odysseus and Penelope, who remained faithful to her husband despite his ten-year absence and over a hundred eager suitors.

Poem 62

Another wedding hymn, in which male and female choruses trade jibes.

The Boys

Arise, for Hesperus, Star of the Evening, is here!
 From Olympus he lifts his long-awaited lamp.
 Youths, arise and leave our luxurious tables.
 The virgin will come and the wedding song be sung.
 Hymen, Hymenaeus, Hymen, come, O Hymenaeus! 5

The Girls

Do you see the boys, O maidens? Rise to the challenge!
 From the heights of Oeta, the Star of the Night displays
 its fires. Do you see the boys and their agile leaps?
 What serious dancing! Their song will be hard to beat.
 Hymen, Hymenaeus, Hymen, come, O Hymenaeus! 10

The Boys

No easy victory, mates, is lying at our feet.
 See the maidens withdraw and practice their parts,
 They know what they're doing. They must have a memorable song.

Of course, they do, with concentration like theirs.
 Our ears and minds are scattered in different directions. 15
 We'll lose and deservedly. Victory loves dedication.
 Summon your full attention, as never before.
 The opening salvo is theirs. Prepare to respond.
 Hymen, Hymenaeus, Hymen, come, O Hymenaeus!

The Girls

Does a crueler fire cruise the sky, O Hesperus, 20
 than you who can snatch a child from her mother's embrace,
 snatch a clinging child from her mother's embrace
 and give the innocent girl to a feverish youth?
 Do enemies sacking a city do anything crueler?
 Hymen, Hymenaeus, Hymen, come, O Hymenaeus! 25

The Boys

What finer fire shines in heaven, Hesperus,
 than you whose light confirms the bonds of marriage,
 the previous pacts that husbands and parents have made?
 Before your fire shines, no union occurs.
 What timely gift of the gods is more desired? 30
 Hymen, Hymenaeus, Hymen, come, O Hymenaeus!

The Girls

Hesperus captured one of our number, friends!
 [The rest of this stanza is missing.]

The Boys

The watchman starts his work when he sees you arrive.
 You return with an altered name, the "Morning Star,"
 and capture the thieves that hid in the shadows, Hesperus. 35
 Maidens pretend that they find your actions offensive!
 So what, when they secretly long for the things they decry?
 Hymen, Hymenaeus, Hymen, come, O Hymenaeus.

The Girls

As a flower that blooms concealed by garden walls,
 unknown to herds of cattle, untouched by a plough, 40
 caressed and nurtured by breezes, sun, and rain,
 is an object desired by many boys and girls,
 but withers when cut by a slender fingernail
 and loses its charm in the eyes of boys and girls,
 so a maiden remaining untouched is dear to her friends. 45
 With her body defiled and the bloom of virginity gone,
 she loses appeal to the boys and the girls' affection.
 Hymen, Hymenaeus, Hymen, come, O Hymenaeus.

The Boys

A widowed vine that grows in an empty field
 will never rise or bear its luscious fruit, 50
 but droops beneath the weight of its tender body,
 the sprouting tendrils constantly touching the root.
 No farmers or cattle take time to care for the plant.
 But suppose it is lucky enough to be joined to an elm,
 many the farmers and cattle who care for it then. 55
 A maiden remaining unmarried is also neglected,
 but winning a suitable spouse at a suitable age
 is dear to her man and less despised by her father.
 O virgin bride, don't balk at such a husband,
 a man selected for you by your father himself, 60
 your father and mother, the people you must obey.
 Your virginal bloom is not entirely your own.
 A third belongs to your father, a third to your mother.
 That leaves but a third for you. You're one against two.
 And they've given the groom their shares, along with a dowry. 65
 Hymen, Hymenaeus, Hymen, come, O Hymenaeus!

1. **Star of the Evening** or **Hesperus** (from the Greek for evening) is really Venus, the sky's brightest natural object apart from the sun and moon. From its prominence at dawn as well as dusk, it is also known as the Morning Star. Hesperus is invoked in this poem as a god of night whose coming is associated with the consummation of marriages.

5. **Hymen . . . Hymenaeus:** see note on Poem 61.5.

7. **Oeta:** a mountain near Olympus. The girls avoid repeating the boys' words.

34. **Morning Star:** see note on line 1.

Poem 63

At the heart of this narrative hymn is the Phrygian goddess, Cybele, whose rites were introduced into Italy in the third century B.C. Cybele was a matronly goddess identified with the Greek Rhea, mother of Zeus. Her rites were similar to Dionysus' in that ecstatic music and dancing were central. Cybele's rites, however, were conducted by castrated priests known as Galli. (The name, which is coincidentally identical to the Latin term for the tribesmen of France, the Gauls, is derived from a stream, the Gallus, in Asia Minor. In Poem 63, Catullus uses the feminine form, Gallae, in reference to their castration.) Attis was the name given to a hero associated in various myths with Cybele. In a version told by Ovid (*Fasti* 4.223–46), he was Cybele's lover. She drove him to castrate himself in a fit of madness after he was unfaithful to her. As far as we know, Catullus' treatment is unique. He depicts Attis as a Greek youth in historical times who travels to Phrygia and castrates himself in a fit of madness.

Attis had hastened across towering seas on a raft.
 Eagerly setting his swift foot in the Phrygian grove,
 he entered the goddess's dark, forest-encircled domain
 and there was attacked by insanity's goad. Blinded by passion,
 he lightened the weight of his loins with a sharp fragment of flint. 5
 When *she* ascertained what was left of her limbs, lacking the male,
 trickling blood on the ground from her wound, freshly inflicted,
 she excitedly took in her white hands a petite tambourine,
 Cybele's horn, tool of your sacrosanct rituals, mother.
 Striking the tight hide of the bull with her delicate fingers, 10
 she shivered and started to sing words such as these to her friends:
 "Hurry! Ascend to the high forests of Cybele, Gallae!
 Start the stampede, wandering herds of the mistress of Dindymus.
 These are the strange regions you sought when you went into exile,
 adopting my life's path and accepting my leadership, friends, 15
 bearing the sea's sudden upheavals and truculent acts,
 —and unmanning yourselves on account of your great hatred of Venus.
 Gladden our mistress's heart, blindly decamping in haste.

Empty your spirits of sluggish delay. Hasten together
 to Cybele's Phrygian home, Phrygian groves of the goddess, 20
 where the voice of the cymbals and tambourines' din echo each other,
 where a Phrygian piper performs songs on his circular reed,
 where ivy-bedecked Maenads are violently shaking their heads,
 where they conduct sacred observances shrieking and howling,
 where the divinity's vagabond troop customarily flies. 25
 It is right that we rush to the spot, frantically leaping and kicking."
 No sooner has Attis, the false woman, intoned these commands,
 than her comrades begin shrieking and howling with fluttering tongues.
 Her light tambourine calls and the clattering cymbals reply.
 The chorus, aroused, hastens on foot to the forests of Ida. 30
 Attis is leading them, ranging at large, gasping and panting,
 holding her tambourine, finding a dark path through the forest,
 wild as a young heifer avoiding the weight of a yoke,
 and the Gallae are swift in pursuit, chasing their fleet-footed leader.
 When they finally arrive at the goddess's home, women exhausted 35
 from strenuous labor, they nap, slighting assistance from Ceres.
 Inertia descends on them; indolent Sleep blankets their eyes.
 In the quiet of slumber their souls' rabid derangement departs.
 When the golden-faced god of the sun scoured the heavens, the earth's
 solid expanse, and the wild sea with his radiant gaze, 40
 and his thunderous, galloping steeds scattered the shadows of night,
 Sleep was disturbed and he left, fled the awakening Attis.
 (The goddess Pasithea welcomed him back, trembling to kiss him.)
 Attis herself, casting off gentle repose and being free
 from insanity's sudden attacks, thought of the things she had done 45
 and saw with lucidity where she had come, lacking in what.
 Violently shaken in spirit, she trudged back to the shore.
 She regarded the desolate sea with her eyes sprinkling tears
 and made this pathetic appeal in a sad voice to her fatherland:
 "Land of our fathers, creator of life, land of my birth, 50
 land that I fled (fatal mistake!) like a fugitive slave
 deserting his lords, steering my path to the forests of Ida
 to live in the region of snow and the cold stables of beasts,
 visiting animals' hidden retreats, brimming with madness,
 where do I reckon you lie, fatherland, how can I see you? 55
 My eye by itself struggles to fasten its gaze on your shores
 during my soul's fleeting remissions from furious madness.

Am I to be torn from my home, kept in these faraway places?
 Lost to my friends, parents, and country, and all that I own.
 Gone from the forum and the wrestling ground, tracks and gymnasia? 60
 What absolute misery! Spirit, repent over and over!
 What is the form yet to be mine—or the species of beauty?
 A woman, once *I* was a male, *I* was a boy, a cadet.
I, the gymnasium's flower. My limbs glistened with oil.
 My doorway was crowded; my porch, warmed by the vigils of lovers. 65
 Whenever the coming of dawn roused me out of my chamber,
 I knew I would see ribbons and flowers festooning my gate.
 Am I to be known as a priestess, a maidservant of Cybele?
 A Maenad, a part of myself, male but producing no fruit?
 Am I to inhabit the cold, snow-covered pastures of Ida, 70
 cower beneath Phrygia's columns the rest of my life,
 friend to the deer ranging the forest and boars of the grove?
 Now what I did is beginning to hurt. Now I repent."
 Attis' breathless lament leaving her roseate lips
 carries its novel complaints to the gods' duplicate ears. 75
 Then Cybele loosens the yoke binding her leonine team
 and goading the flock's dire antagonist utters a speech.
 "Come, my ferocious!" she says. "See that insanity shakes him.
 See that he panics and runs back to my groves in confusion.
 One wishing to flee my domain carries his freedom too far. 80
 Come now and bloody your back with your tail! Feel your own flogging!
 Make the entire locale shake with your bellowing roar!
 Rustle the red mane on your muscular neck, my ferocious."
 Speaking these ominous words, Cybele lifted his harness.
 The primitive beast rapidly working himself to a frenzy 85
 advances and roars, crushing the shrubs with his wandering foot,
 and comes to a portion of shore dampened and whitened by foam.
 Spotting the frail youth at the edge of the glistening sea,
 he makes his attack. Attis retreats to the woods in hysterics.
 There she remained for the rest of her days, maid of the deity. 90
 Powerful goddess, divine lady of Dindymus, Cybele,
 keep all your fury away from my house, far away, mistress.
 Let others succumb to your power. Direct your insanity elsewhere.

2. **the Phrygian grove:** the poem seems to be set on the shore in the forest of Mt. Ida (see line 30), near the Hellespont and Troy. The center

of the worship of Cybele was the inland city of Pessinus at the foot of Mt. Dindymus. Cybele was identified with Rhea, who was closely connected with Mt. Ida in Crete, where she concealed the infant Zeus. Troy was called “Phrygian” by a poetic extension of the term, which more properly designated eastern Turkey.

12. **Gallae:** see head note.

13. **Dindymus:** mountain in Phrygia near the city of Pessinus, the center of Cybele’s worship.

30. **Ida:** see note on line 2.

36. **slighting assistance from Ceres:** Ceres was the goddess of grain. Catullus means that the Gallae fell asleep without eating.

42–43. In *Iliad* 14.267–79, Hera bribes **Sleep** to overcome Zeus by promising him **Pasithea** (one of the three Graces), with whom Sleep has long been in love.

Poem 64

Poem 64 represents the kind of poem that has come to be called an “epyllion,” or miniature epic, characterized by allusive, interwoven episodes from various myths. Poem 64 presupposes familiarity with the elderly sea god Nereus and his fifty daughters, the Nereids, nymphs of the sea. The loveliest of these was Thetis, who was fated to have a son greater than his father. Fearing competition from such a son, Zeus arranged that she marry a mortal, the virtuous Peleus, king of Thessaly. To Peleus Thetis bore a son, Achilles, who became the greatest warrior at Troy. The marriage of Peleus and Thetis was an exceptional event, the union of a goddess and a mortal with the blessing of the gods.

Poem 64 begins with the meeting of Peleus and Thetis. Peleus was one of the heroes who joined Jason in search of the Golden Fleece. According to the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, Peleus was already married to Thetis when the Argo set sail (1.558). Catullus, however, imagines that Peleus first saw Thetis on this journey. He then describes the wedding of Peleus and Thetis with two major digressions. First, a tapestry on the wedding couch depicts the heroine Ariadne. This gives Catullus a chance to tell her story, which is intertwined with that of Theseus, hero of Athens. Returning to the wedding, Catullus depicts the three Fates arriving and foretelling the birth of Achilles and the devastation that he will inflict on the Trojans. Catullus concludes with regret that we are no longer worthy of being visited by gods and goddesses.

Pines descended from Pelion’s peak, they say,
anciently swam through Neptune’s surging waters

to the land the Phasis lapped and Aeetes ruled,
 when a band of chosen youths, the bastion of Argos,
 hoping to take the Golden Fleece from Colchis, 5
 dared traverse the salty depths in a hull,
 sweeping the radiant blue with fir-tree hands.
 The goddess herself, whose fortresses rise above cities,
 joined the latticed pine to a rigid keel,
 creating a craft that flew on the gentlest breeze. 10
 That ship was the first to touch the rude Amphitrite.
 Its beak no sooner divided the windy main,
 a wave no sooner boiled beneath the oars,
 than the watery daughters of Nereus lifted their heads
 from the ocean's swirling foam to admire the prodigy. 15
 Never before or since have nymphs emerged
 from the swirl and shown their naked bodies, faces,
 and bosoms to mortal eyes. That day they did.
 Then Peleus burned, it is said, with love for Thetis.
 Then Thetis no longer despised a human wedding. 20
 Then the father himself considered Peleus worthy.

Born in an age that stirs unbearable longing,
 heroes, descendants of gods, of virtuous mothers
 the virtuous progeny, hail and hail again! 23B
 In composing the songs I sing I shall often invoke you,
 especially you, O pillar of Thessaly, Peleus, 25
 so wondrously happy in marriage. For Jupiter, father
 of gods, himself conceded his lover to you.
 Did the loveliest daughter of Nereus, Thetis, embrace you?
 Did Tethys and he who encircles the world with his stream,
 Oceanus, permit you to marry their children's child? 30

When the long-awaited light of the chosen day
 appears, the entire region of Thessaly throngs
 to his home. The palace is filled with a festive assembly.
 They carry their gifts in their hands, their joy on their faces.
 Leaving Phthiotian Tempe, the houses of Crannon, 35
 the walls of Larissa, and Cieros empty, they flock
 to Pharsalus. Pharsalian houses are filled to capacity.
 Farming has stopped. The oxen go soft in the shoulders.

The jagged rake neglects the creeping vine.
 The bull and the blade relax from busting clods. 40
 No shears reduce the shade that branches cast,
 and squalid rust invades deserted plows.
 Within the groom's palatial residence all
 the corridors glow with sparkling gold and silver.
 Ivory shines on the couches, cups on the table. 45
 No room can be seen but gleams with royal wealth.
 The very nuptial bed of the goddess is placed
 in the midst of the dwelling. Burnished ivory glows
 beneath a crimson blanket, dyed by the conch.
 This garment adorned with antique human figures 50
 displays heroic virtues with wondrous art.

Here on Dia's boisterous shore Ariadne
 gazes at Theseus leaving, him and his fleet.
 Her heart is full of uncontrollable fury.
 She sees what she sees, but she hardly believes that she sees it. 55
 How else could she feel when, emerging from treacherous sleep,
 she found herself on an empty beach, deserted?
 The heedless youth is shattering waves with his oars,
 leaving to windy storms his empty promises.
 Minos' daughter can only watch from a distance 60
 with seaweed entangling her feet. She gapes like a Maenad
 of marble, then staggers beneath emotional waves.
 Her delicate turban fell from its golden peak;
 the diaphanous gown disappeared that draped her shoulders;
 no silken cincture bound her milky breasts. 65
 All of her clothing slipped from her body, becoming
 the toy of the salty waves that swirled at her feet.
 But she was oblivious then to the fate of her turban
 and flowing robe. Her entire heart and soul
 and crumbling intellect, Theseus, hung upon you. 70
 What a sorrowful girl! The goddess of Eryx sowed
 insanity, ceaseless tears, and thorny cares
 in her heart on that occasion, the day the insolent
 Theseus, leaving the sheltered shores of Piraeus,
 attained the criminal king's Gortynian towers. 75
 Compelled by a deadly plague (the story goes)

to atone for Androgean slaughter, the city of Cecrops
 became accustomed to giving the Minotaur feasts,
 their finest youths and the flower of maidens at once.
 The little town being vexed by such calamities, 80
 Theseus chose to offer himself in person
 for Athens, the city he loved, instead of permitting
 the kingdom to send such living cadavers to Crete.
 And thus on a rapid ship and gentle breezes
 he came to the arrogant towers of mettlesome Minos, 85
 attracting the amorous gaze of a royal virgin,
 a girl who lay in her mother's gentle embrace
 on a beautiful bed suffused with purest scents,
 which rivaled the myrtle Eurotas' waters produce
 and all of the blossoms that bend in the vernal breeze. 90
 The moment the maiden lowered her glistening eyes
 from the hero, a fire engulfed her entire frame,
 igniting the depths of her being, her innermost marrow.
 O sacred boy who cruelly stirs unruly
 passions and blends the joys of men with sorrow, 95
 and you, supreme in Golgi and leafy Idalium,
 how great the waves in which you tossed the smoldering
 maiden, constantly sighing for her fair-haired guest.
 How great the fears she endured with her failing heart!
 How pale her face became, and brighter than gold, 100
 when Theseus, eager to fight a savage monster,
 left on his quest for death or glory's rewards.
 The gifts she promised the gods, while incense burned
 and she made her silent prayers, were not in vain.
 On Taurus' summit, tornadoes' unruly, twisting 105
 winds upend a coniferous pine with its sticky
 bark, or an oak with thrashing branches spins
 its trunk in the blast. Uprooted, the tree collapses
 and crushes what lies in the way of its headlong descent.
 So Theseus leveled the monster, taming his strength, 110
 as he tossed his horns in vain at the empty breeze.
 And the hero returned in safety, showered with praise,
 guiding his fallible feet with a slender thread.
 Missteps unnoticed had otherwise foiled his attempt
 to leave the building's winding paths behind. 115

But why have I strayed from the starting point of my song?
 Why should I dwell on the way the daughter, deserting
 her sire's smile and the arms of a sister and mother,
 who desperately doted upon her piteous child,
 preferred to these the honeyed love of Theseus 120
 or how she disembarked on the foaming shore
 of Dia or how her absent-minded husband
 deserted her there when her eyes were locked in sleep?
 People maintain that the furious woman filled
 the air with piercing cries from the depths of her being. 125
 Driven by grief, she climbed a jagged cliff
 and surveyed the ocean's turbulent desolation,
 then returned to the beach and braved the salty breakers,
 raising her delicate skirts, exposing her ankles,
 and uttered these words, this final complaint, between 130
 the feeble sobs that shook her humid lips:
 "Did you take me away from the shrines of my family, Theseus,
 traitor, to leave me alone on an empty shore?
 Do you sail for your home with the will of the gods neglected,
 forgetful, guilty of perjury, laden with curses? 135
 Had nothing the strength to bend your brutal mind's
 decision? No mercy find a way to soften
 your heart, to make you feel a twinge of compassion?
 How different the promises showered on me in gentle
 tones! How different the expectations you raised 140
 in my piteous heart of a wedding, a happy marriage!
 The winds have taken and scattered those empty hopes.
 No woman should place her trust in a masculine vow
 or think the speeches she hears from a man are sincere.
 When their spirit is yearning for something they long to possess, 145
 no oath is too awesome, no promise too costly to make.
 But quell the lust of their questing minds, at once
 their words are forgotten and perjury ceases to matter.
 It was surely none other than I by whom you were snatched
 from a deadly storm, who chose to abandon my brother 150
 to stand at your treacherous side at the moment of crisis.
 And *this* is your thanks: I'm left to be torn by the birds
 and the beasts, to die and lie exposed, unburied.
 What lioness bore you, lying in a rocky cave?

What swollen sea or shoal, what hungry Scylla 155
 or vast Charybdis conceived and spat you forth
 that you give such rewards for the sweet restoration of life?
 If the notion of me as your wife was not to your liking
 because you respected your father's harsh restrictions,
 still nothing prevented your taking me into your house. 160
 I would have been happy to work as a slave in your retinue,
 to wash your glistening feet in crystal water
 or care for your bedclothes, smoothing your purple sheets.
 I must be out of my mind! Why else would I wail
 in vain to these ignorant winds, these senseless entities, 165
 who neither can hear nor reply to what I say.
 That man by now is all but engulfed by the waves.
 No mortal appears on the shore, just empty weeds.
 My fate is cruel indeed; it mocks my demise
 by depriving my dying complaints of listening ears. 170
 Omnipotent Jupiter, would that Cecropian hulls
 had never succeeded in reaching the shores of Cnossus,
 the traitorous sailor conducting the furious bull's
 unholy tribute had never docked in Crete,
 and the evil guest whose handsome form concealed 175
 such brutal designs had never slept in my palace.
 Ruined, what hope do I have? What possible refuge?
 Seek the peaks of Ida? The seething expanse
 of the sea has placed its vast abyss in my way.
 Should I hope for my father's assistance, the man I abandoned 180
 to follow a youth still dripping my brother's blood?
 Is my husband's faithful love a source of comfort?
 He bends his oars in flight against the tide.
 No houses are seen on the shore. The island is empty.
 The encircling waves prevent departure. No method 185
 appears, no hope of escaping. Everything here
 is silent and empty. Everything points to death.
 Death will not becloud my eyes, however,
 nor senses depart my tired limbs before
 I demand of the deities just revenge for betrayal, 190
 appealing to heavenly faith in my final hour.
 So, you who avenge the deeds of men, Eumenides,
 Furies whose foreheads snaky ringlets frame

and show the seething wrath your hearts conceal,
 be present here and now and heed the complaints 195
 that burst from the depths of my being. What misery! Gods!
 I'm helpless, on fire, blind with irrational rage.
 As my grievance is real and my tears are wrung from my heart,
 do not permit my sorrow to be forgotten,
 but let the heedless mind of Theseus cause, 200
 O goddesses, death and destruction to him and his kin."
 Once she poured these words from her sorrowful breast,
 urging the castigation of brutal crimes,
 the rector of heaven bestowed his omnipotent nod.
 At this the earth and heaving seas began 205
 to shake, the heavens rattled their glistening stars,
 and a blinding mist enveloped the mind of Theseus.
 All the commands that he formerly kept secure
 in his memory slipped from the grasp of his careless mind:
 he forgot to raise the sign for his sorrowful father 210
 to show he surveyed the Erechtheid harbor in safety.
 For they say at the time that Aegeus trusted his son
 to the winds, when his fleet was departing the goddess's walls,
 he enfolded the youth in his arms and gave him these orders:
 "My only son, more pleasing than life prolonged, 215
 my child whom I send perforce on a perilous mission,
 newly restored in the final stage of my life,
 since fortune and your impassioned virtue combine
 to take you away from me against my will
 before your beauty has sated these tired eyes, 220
 I'll not bid adieu with a smile and a happy heart
 or permit you to fly a banner of happy fate,
 but rather express the many pains in my heart,
 by fouling with earth and dust my grizzled head,
 then hanging tinted sails from your wandering mast, 225
 so linens obscured by the dusky pigment of Spain
 will signal the grief and the fires that burn in my heart.
 But supposing the goddess who dwells in holy Itonus
 and has deigned to defend our race and the homes of Erechtheus
 allows you to rinse your hands in the blood of the bull, 230
 be sure at that point these commands I entrust to your memory
 retain their force and are not erased by time.

The moment your eyes catch sight of the hills of our kingdom,
 order the yardarms to lower their dreary garb
 and the braided ropes to elevate whitened sails. 235
 Observing this joyous sight with a jubilant heart
 I will know at once that a happy day has restored you.”
 As clouds compelled by the force of the winds depart
 an airy mountain’s snowy peak, his instructions
 slipped the mind of the once reliable Theseus. 240
 From the citadel’s height, his father scanned the horizon,
 wearing away his anxious eyes with tears.
 As soon as he saw the tint of the billowing sail,
 he dove from the highest peak of the jagged cliffs,
 convinced ungentle Fate had deprived him of Theseus. 245
 So brutal Theseus entered a house of mourning
 because of the death of his father and felt the pitch
 of pain his memory’s lapse had caused Ariadne,
 who watched his vessel withdraw with tears in her eyes
 absorbing the swarming griefs that wounded her heart. 250
 From another direction, however, Iacchus was flying
 to your side, Ariadne, ablaze with desire for you.
 Sileni from Nysa and capering satyrs were there,
 Delirious Thyades frantically thronged the divinity,
 tossing their heads and shouting the Bacchic “Euhoe!” 255
 some of them brandishing wands with leafy points,
 some of them tossing the limbs of a slaughtered bull,
 some of them wreathing their heads with coiling snakes,
 some of them tending to mysteries hidden in baskets,
 mysteries skeptics vainly desire to penetrate; 260
 others were beating drums with lifted hands,
 eliciting shrill responses from polished bronze;
 many raised a raucous blare with horns;
 barbarian flutes were singing their tremulous songs.

Such were the figures contained in the richly adorned 265
 fabric enclosing the couch in its woolen embrace.
 Sating their eager desire to see it, the people
 of Thessaly started departing, yielding to gods.
 So Zephyr, who roughens the tranquil sea, awakens
 the waves from their level rest with his breath in the morning, 270

while Aurora departs the porch of the vagrant Sun.
 The breakers are sluggish at first in the gentle breeze
 and splash on the beach with the sound of quiet laughter.
 Later the wind and the number of waves increase,
 and their crests on the deep reflect the roseate light. 275
 In a similar manner the people of Thessaly flowed
 from the palace, taking their separate paths to their homes.
 Upon their departure, Chiron was first to arrive,
 delivering rustic gifts from the summit of Pelion,
 for he carried a jumbled array of flowery garlands 280
 with all of the blossoms the fields produce, that Thessaly
 bears on its giant hills, or the fertile breath
 of the warming Favonus begets on the banks of a river.
 Suffused by the odor, the house was full of smiles.
 Peneus arrives deserting the verdure of Tempe, 285
 Tempe a valley encircled by towering forests,
 left to the dancing and song of Haemonian Dryads.
 His hands were far from empty. He carried beech
 and lofty laurel trees with soaring trunks,
 a nodding plane, a cypress that reached the sky, 290
 and a poplar (flaming Phaethon's flexible sister).
 He interwove these trees around the palace,
 creating a lobby of green, a leafy foyer.
 Crafty-hearted Prometheus followed this god,
 bearing the faded scars of the ancient penalty 295
 paid when he hung from the top of a rugged cliff
 with his arms and legs attached to the rocks by a chain.
 The father of gods arrived with his sacred wife
 and his children, though Phoebus, you stayed behind in the sky,
 you and your sister who haunts the mountains of Idrus. 300
 You joined with your sister in treating the hero with scorn;
 she too was unwilling to celebrate Thetis' wedding.
 The other gods reclined on ivory couches.
 Their tables were high with a rich and various feast.
 The Fates arrived betimes, their feeble bodies 305
 shaking, and sang their melodious revelations.
 Garments of white enclosed their palsied frames,
 trimmed by scarlet borders touching their ankles.
 Rosy ribbons reposed on snowy peaks,

and their hands performed their solemn, eternal task. 310
 On the left, they held the distaff, cloaked by wool;
 on the right, they extracted threads with the delicate touch
 of fingers facing up. With a twist of the thumb,
 they attached these threads to the spindle and spun the wheel.
 From time to time, they smoothed the work with their teeth. 315
 Their withered lips were flecked with bits of wool
 that formerly caused the slender threads to bulge.
 Wicker baskets lay at their feet to guard
 woolen fleeces, soft and shiny white.
 And while the Fates were combing the fleeces, prophecy 320
 streamed from their lips in harmony shrill and divine,
 a song no later age would ever disprove:

“Emathia’s fortress and beautiful jewel enhanced
 by eminent virtues but most renowned in your son,
 hear the oracular truths we sisters unfold 325
 this happy day, but you, the guides of destiny,
 spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 The Evening Star will arrive, conferring the pleasures
 that husbands desire, arrive escorting a wife,
 who will flood your heart with overwhelming love, 330
 circle your sturdy neck with her delicate arms,
 and prepare to share a night of languid sleep.
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 No home has ever contained such love before,
 no love has ever united lovers with bonds 335
 of harmony such as Thetis and Peleus share.
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 To you will Achilles be born, a stranger to fear.
 Though his back is unknown to the foe, his chest is familiar.
 He will often outdistance the fiery hooves of a deer 340
 and emerge from their wandering competition victorious.
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 No hero will dare compare himself in war
 when Teucrian blood has flooded the Phrygian fields
 and the ruler descended third from the perjurer Pelops 345
 wastes the walls of Troy with a lengthy siege.
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.

Mothers will often acknowledge his excellent virtues
 and glorious deeds at the funeral pyres of sons,
 when they loosen the scraggly locks on their snowy peaks 350
 and bruise their withered breasts with palsied fists.
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 As a reaper traversing a golden field in the heat
 of the sun cuts down the crowding ears of grain,
 his furious sword will level the ranks of the Trojans. 355
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 Scamander's wave will testify to his excellence
 as it spreads across the rapid Hellespont,
 after its stream has been choked by slaughtered bodies
 and its deepest currents warmed by human blood. 360
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 A trophy awarded in death will testify too:
 his rounded sepulcher, raised to royal height,
 receives a stricken maiden's snowy limbs.
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric. 365
 The day that Fortune confers on the weary Achaeans
 the power to break the Neptunian chains of Dardania
 the lofty mound will drip with Polyxena's blood.
 Her neck will bend to the axe like an animal victim.
 Her knee will bend and headless body fall. 370
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 So come and fulfill the love your souls desire.
 Groom accept a goddess by lucky conveyance
 and bride submit to his loving arms at last.
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric. 375
 Returning at dawn the nurse will fail to encircle
 her neck with the ribbon she wore the day before.
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric.
 No quarrelsome maiden is here, no anxious mother
 feeling the sting of divorce and despairing of grandchildren. 380
 Spindles, spin on and on, enlarging the fabric."
 Such were the happy, prophetic songs of the Fates
 that poured from the goddesses' chests for Peleus then.

In days of old, before we banished piety,
 the rulers of heaven visited chaste abodes 385

of heroes, presenting themselves in mortal assemblies.
 Often the father of gods in a glistening temple,
 when a yearly rite and festive days had come,
 observed the falling to earth of a hundred bulls.
 Often the wandering Liber drove from the peak 390
 of Parnassus reveling Maenads with flowing hair,
 whereat the joyous Delphians eagerly emptied
 their city to greet the god with altars blazing.
 Often amid the deadly contests of war,
 the Rhamnusia maiden, mistress of Triton, or Mars 395
 would rally the armored bands of men in person.
 But since the earth has dripped with nefarious guilt,
 since passions have routed justice from every mind,
 and brothers have washed their hands in brotherly blood,
 a son has refused to mourn his parents' demise, 400
 a father has plotted the death of his youthful son
 to pluck for himself the bloom of his daughter-in-law,
 and an evil mother has evilly dared to offend
 the gods of her family beneath her ignorant son,
 the mad confusion of everything right and wrong 405
 has driven away the righteous minds of the gods.
 Wherefore, they neither attend such mortal assemblies
 nor let themselves be touched by the light of day.

1. **Pelion:** a wooded mountain in Thessaly. Pines from Pelion were used to build the Argo, Jason's ship.

3. **the land the Phasis lapped and Aeetes ruled:** the Phasis river flowed through the kingdom of Colchis on the Black Sea. Its king, Aeetes, jealously guarded the Golden Fleece.

4. **the bastion of Argos:** in the generation before the Trojan War, all the young heroes of "Argos," i.e., Greece, accompanied Jason.

5. **Colchis:** see note on line 3.

8. **the goddess herself:** Minerva, Greek Athena, supervised the building of the Argo, which Catullus represents as the first ship.

11. **Amphitrite:** goddess of the sea, wife of Neptune.

14. **daughters of Nereus:** see head note.

19. **Peleus . . . Thetis:** see head note.

23B. Half of this line is omitted in the manuscripts. Editors disregard it in numbering the poem's lines.

29–30. **Tethys . . . Oceanus:** Titans, children of Uranos and Gaia, aunt and uncle to Jupiter, and the parents of Nereus.

32. **Thessaly:** large, fertile region in northeastern Greece.

35. **Phthiotian Tempe:** Tempe is a proverbially pretty valley in Thessaly. Phthiotis was a Thessalian district that was home to Peleus and Achilles.

35–37. **Crannon . . . Larissa . . . Cieros . . . Pharsalus:** towns in Thessaly. Pharsalus was the site of Caesar's victory over Pompey in 48 B.C.

52. **Dia's . . . shore Ariadne:** Ariadne was a princess of Crete, daughter of King Minos and Queen Pasiphaë and thus half-sister of Pasiphaë's monstrous offspring, the Minotaur. Theseus killed the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne, who fell in love with Theseus at first sight. He then eloped with her but abandoned her as she slept on the shore of the island of Naxos or "Dia," as it was originally called.

53. **Theseus,** son of Aegeus, king of Athens, was reunited with his father in the latter's old age. Having lost a war with Minos of Crete, the Athenians were forced to send fourteen youths and maidens annually to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, who was housed in the hopelessly complex labyrinth. Theseus joined the victims voluntarily to try to kill the Minotaur.

60. **Minos' daughter:** Ariadne; see note on line 52.

71. **goddess of Eryx:** Venus. Eryx is a mountain on the western tip of Sicily with a temple of Venus on its top. A city by the same name lay at its foot.

74. **Piraeus:** the port of Athens.

75. **Gortynian towers:** Gortyn was a Cretan city; here "Gortynian" just means "Cretan."

77. **Androgean slaughter:** Androgeus, Minos' son, was a victor in the Panathenaic Games, the Athenian equivalent of the Olympics, but was murdered afterwards by unknown assailants. Minos held the Athenians responsible and imposed the tribute (see note on line 53). According to Apollodorus (3.15.7) and others, the gods forced Athens to submit to Minos by sending a plague or famine.

city of Cecrops: Athens. Cecrops was its first king.

89. **Eurotas:** the river in southern Greece that flows through Sparta.

96. **supreme in Golgi and leafy Idalium:** Venus, since Golgi and Idalium were two of the towns in Crete famous for temples to her.

105. **Taurus:** actually a chain of mountains in Asia Minor, rather than the single peak that Catullus seems to envision. It stretches along the southern coast and eastern border of modern Turkey.

113. **a slender thread:** Theseus used a thread held at the entrance by Ariadne to guide himself out of the labyrinth.

155. **Scylla**: see note on Poem 60.2.
156. **Charybdis**: see note on Poem 60.2.
171. **Cecropian hulls**: see note on line 77 (city of Cecrops).
178. **Ida**: a mountain of Crete, not to be confused with the mountain of the same name that overlooks Troy; cp. note on Poem 63.2.
192. **Eumenides**: the “Kindly Ones,” a euphemistic title of the Erinyes (Latin Furies), snake-haired hags who lived in the underworld and punished violations of intimate bonds.
211. **Erechtheid harbor**: Athens or, more exactly, Piraeus. Erechtheus was an early king of Athens, the child of Earth and Vulcan.
212. **Aegeus**: king of Athens. He was the father of Theseus by Aethra, princess of Troezen in southern Greece, unless (as rumor had it) the real father was Neptune. Aethra raised Theseus. To be acknowledged as Aegeus’ heir, Theseus had to recover a sword and sandals left by Aegeus beneath a boulder in Troezen. He did so and made his way to Athens, killing criminals along the way. In Athens, the sorceress Medea nearly succeeded in having him poisoned, but Aegeus recognized the sword in the nick of time and embraced his son.
226. **pigment of Spain**: apparently a dye produced from iron ore. Judging by ancient descriptions, the color it produced corresponded to “navy blue.”
228. **holy Itonus**: or Iton, a town in Thessaly with a temple of Athena.
229. **Erechtheus**: see note on line 211.
251. **Iacchus**: alternative name for Bacchus or Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry. Ariadne was saved when Dionysus, who just happened to be reveling on the wine-producing island of Naxos at the time, saw her and fell in love. He married her, made her immortal, and transformed the crown that she was wearing into a constellation; cp. note on Poem 66.59.
253. **sileni from Nysa and . . . satyrs**: Bacchus’ male followers, satyrs were wild humanoid creatures with horses’ manes, tails, and hooves. An elderly satyr was known as a silenus (plural sileni). Bacchus was raised by nymphs and satyrs on Mt. Nysa in Asia Minor. Nysa is a mythical location, derived from the name Dionysus, understood as meaning “god of Nysa.”
254. **Thyades**: a likely emendation in the text, a synonym for the Maenads or Bacchantes, the ecstatic female followers of Bacchus. An Athenian woman named Thyia was supposedly the first Maenad.
255. **Euhoe!**: the traditional representation of a loud cheer used by Bacchus’ followers.
259. **mysteries hidden in baskets**: followers of Bacchus practiced se-

cret rites. Some involved sacred objects that were kept concealed from non-initiates. Roman frescoes from the “Villa of Mysteries” in Pompeii show a Dionysiac revel in the middle of which lies a basket with a partially concealed representation of a phallus.

278. **Chiron:** the wise centaur, tutor of heroes including Achilles and Jason.

283. **Favonus:** Zephyr in Greek, the gentle west wind, a harbinger of spring.

287. **Haemonian Dryads:** Haemonia is a poetic name for Thessaly. Dryads are nymphs associated with oak trees.

291. **Phaethon’s flexible sister:** Phaethon was the illegitimate son of the Sun. Wanting assurance of this fact, he talked his father into letting him drive his chariot, but he lost control, set the earth on fire, and had to be blasted out of the sky by Jove. His sisters mourned him for such a long time that the gods finally turned them into trees, lithe poplars that sway as they continue to mourn.

294. **Prometheus:** the son of a Titan, Prometheus tricked Jove into accepting the less desirable portion of the ox as the divine portion in sacrifices. Angered, Jove took fire away from mankind. Prometheus stole some from the gods’ forge and gave it back. Jove then punished mankind by inventing women and Prometheus by nailing him to a cliff where Jove’s eagle ate his liver (Hesiod, *Theogony* 507–616). In Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus knows that Thetis is fated to bear a son greater than his father and that this poses a danger for the amorous Zeus. As David Konstan points out in *Catullus’ Indictment of Rome: The Meaning of Catullus 64* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1977), 26, the usual explanation for the wedding of Peleus and Thetis is that Zeus finally learned about this danger from Prometheus, freed him, and decreed that Thetis should marry a mortal (Hyginus, *Astrologia* 2.15). Hence Prometheus played a critical role in bringing about the wedding.

300. **Idrus:** Phoebus is a byname for Apollo. His sister is Diana. The passage is otherwise obscure. “Mountains of Idrus” apparently designates a site of Diana’s worship. Some myth known to Catullus (but not to us) must have explained why she and Apollo boycotted the wedding. Oddly, in Homer’s *Iliad* (24.63) Hera specifically states that Apollo did attend the wedding of Peleus, playing the lyre.

305. The **Fates** are pictured as three old women spinning wool. The threads they wind and snip symbolize lives.

323. **Emathia’s fortress:** Peleus. Emathia, actually a small district in Macedonia, is used here of Thessaly.

328. **Evening Star:** Venus, prominent at sunrise and sunset, is known as both the Evening and the Morning Star. As in Poem 62.1–2, its appearance in the evening signaled the time for the consummation of a wedding.

344. **Teucrian blood . . . Phrygian fields:** both adjectives are poetic ways of saying “Trojan.” Teucer was an early king of Troy; Phrygia was a nearby kingdom, occupying central Turkey.

345. **perjurer Pelops:** Pelops was the grandfather of Agamemnon, Troy’s conqueror. He won his throne and his bride, Hippodamia, by defeating her father Oenomaus in a chariot race. He won the race by inducing Oenomaus’ servant to replace the metal pins holding Oenomaus’ wheels in place with wax ones. The bribe was the privilege of sleeping with Hippodamia, but Pelops reneged on this promise, killing the servant instead.

357. **Scamander:** a river in the Trojan plain. In *Iliad* 21, it fights Achilles because he is polluting its stream with Trojan corpses.

364. **a stricken maiden:** see note on line 368.

366. **Achaeans:** a Homeric term for the Greeks.

368. **Polyxena:** a princess of Troy. After the Trojan War, the ghost of Achilles appeared to the Greeks and demanded that she be sacrificed to him. The Greeks complied.

376. **the nurse will fail to encircle:** a reference to a belief that the loss of virginity thickened a girl’s neck.

390–92. **Liber . . . Parnassus . . . Maenads . . . Delphians:** Liber, the Greek Dionysus, was worshiped on Mount Parnassus, near the town of Delphi, in the winter. Maenads held outdoor revels in his honor.

395. **the Rhamnusian maiden:** Nemesis, the personification of vengeance, who had a famous temple in Rhamnus, a town near Athens.

mistress of Triton: Minerva, a warrior goddess, possibly so called from a stream named Triton in Boeotia.

Mars: god of war.

Poem 65

Though sorrow, care, and exhaustion call me away
 from the learned maidens, Ortalus,
 and my mind, awash in troubles, cannot deliver
 the Muses’ sweet conceptions,
 for recently Lethe’s swirling currents bathed
 my brother’s pallid foot—

5

He was snatched from my sight and lies on Rhoeteum's shore,
 crushed by Trojan soil.
 [At least one line is missing.]
 Brother more lovely than life, 10
 am I never to see you again? I will love you forever
 and sing of my grief at your death,
 like the woman of Daulis, who lurks on shady boughs,
 weeping for Itylus slain.—
 nevertheless, I enclose translations, Ortalus, 15
 songs by a son of Battus,
 lest you suppose your words are the ward of the wandering
 winds, escaped from my mind
 like an apple, a furtive gift from a maiden's betrothed,
 that slips from her lap, where it hid 20
 in her dress, when the piteous girl forgetfully jumps
 to her feet at her mother's arrival,
 and it rolls away as a guilty blush invades
 the virgin's gloomy face.

2. **Ortalus:** possibly the orator Q. Hortensius Ortalus. Born about 114 B.C., he was consul in 69 and died in 50. He is mentioned by Ovid, Pliny the Younger, and Gellius as a distinguished Roman who wrote light verse. According to Plutarch (*Lucullus* 1.5), he once composed an epic poem on the model of Ennius' *Annals* quickly enough to win a bet. In Poem 95, Catullus refers to Hortensius' rapid versification, possibly a reference to the same incident. In a letter to Atticus (2.3.1), written in 60 B.C., Cicero refers to the successful defense of "Valerius" by Hortensius and hints that Clodia used her influence to gain his acquittal. It is possible that the Valerius involved was none other than Catullus. If so, this might account for the friendly relationship between him and Hortensius that Poem 65 implies.

5. **Lethe:** Oblivion or Forgetfulness, the name of a river in the land of the dead.

7. **Rhoeteum:** a cape on the coast of the Hellespont near Troy.

9. Meter shows that at least one line was omitted from the manuscripts at this point.

13–14. **woman of Daulis . . . Itylus:** Daulis, a town in central Greece, was identified by some as the site of the story of Procne and Philomela, best known now from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6.424–674. Procne was married to a Thracian king, Tereus, who later abducted Philomela, raped her, and cut

off her tongue to ensure her silence. Philomela managed to inform Procne of this by means of a tapestry. Procne punished Tereus by butchering their son Itylus and feeding his flesh to his father. In the end, Tereus and the sisters were transformed into birds whose songs endlessly lament their respective sufferings.

16. **son of Battus:** the poet Callimachus. His father, Battus, claimed descent from the founder of Cyrene; see note on Poem 7.4–5.

Poem 66

The “Bernice” of this poem (Berenice, a quadrisyllabic name in Greek or Latin but anglicized here) was the daughter of Magas, a ruler of Cyrene. He first gained power as a representative of the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt, but broke away from the Ptolemies and even invaded their kingdom. Eventually, he made peace with them by betrothing the young Bernice to the heir of the Ptolemaic throne, Ptolemy III Euergetes. When Magas died in 258 B.C., however, his wife Arsinoë, who opposed the Ptolemies, arranged a marriage between Bernice and Demetrius “the handsome,” brother of Antigonos Gonatas, king of Macedonia. The arrangement foundered when Demetrius had an affair with Arsinoë. The resourceful young Bernice then had him assassinated, supposedly in her mother’s arms, and married Ptolemy III Euergetes, as her father had wished. This is the deed for which Bernice is praised in lines 25–27.

The reign of Euergetes and Bernice, from 247 to 222 B.C. represented the apex of the Ptolemaic monarchy. Euergetes was an avid supporter of the library at Alexandria. Intellectuals who adorned his court included the elderly Callimachus, Eratosthenes, and Apollonius of Rhodes. When Euergetes died, however, Bernice was executed by her own son, Ptolemy IV Philopator, who was jealous of her popularity.

Shortly after his marriage to Bernice, Euergetes launched a successful military campaign against Syria and Mesopotamia. Bernice vowed to dedicate a lock of her hair in the temple of Arsinoë, the deified wife and sister of the previous king—not Bernice’s mother—if he returned safely. She did so, but the lock supposedly disappeared. A court astronomer, Conon, then announced that he had found it—among the stars. It had been transformed into a constellation! Callimachus wrote a poem in the voice of the lock to commemorate the event. One short passage of Callimachus’ poem survives. It suggests that Catullus’ Poem 66 is a fairly close translation of the original.

The eminent Conon, a man who has studied all
the cosmic lights, the routes
of constellations, how the glow of the sun

is darkened and stars retreat,
 how Love disrupted Diana's aerial circuit 5
 and she hid in a Latmian cave,
 Conon, I say, observed me aloft, a glittering
 lock of Bernice's hair,
 the very lock she vowed with arms upraised
 to give to all the gods 10
 that time her newly married king departed
 to destroy the Assyrian realm,
 still bearing the pleasant wounds of a twilight campaign,
 waged for virgin spoil.
 Is Venus despised by brides or are the tears 15
 that worry parents false,
 the gushing tears of brides approaching bedrooms?
 False, so help me gods!
 My mistress's constant complaints while bitter hostilities
 detained her husband proves it. 20
 Do you claim you lamented not your empty bed,
 but a precious brother's absence?
 But how deeply your passion gnawed at your wretched bones!
 How sense and reason departed
 your stricken heart. Yet I was aware of your noble 25
 soul in the days of your childhood.
 Or have you forgotten the deed none other would dare,
 that gained a royal spouse?
 How sad, by Jove, were your parting words to your husband!
 How often you rubbed your eyes! 30
 Was a god to blame or just a lover's dislike
 of a precious body's departure?
 You promised me and slaughtered cattle as gifts
 to all the gods for your darling
 husband's safe return. He quickly added 35
 Asia to Egypt's realm.
 For which I entered the heavens, a traditional vow
 fulfilled in a novel manner.
 Not by choice, O queen, did I leave your brow,
 as I swear by you and your head 40
 (Let him suffer condignly who perjures himself by that!),
 but who could vanquish iron?
 Even the highest of capes surveyed by Thia's

lucid child was divided
 when the Medes created a sea and barbarian youths 45
 sailed a fleet through Athos.
 With iron so powerful, how could hair resist?
 Destroy the Chalybes, Jupiter!
 and the man who first discovered veins of iron
 and how to mold its solidity. 50
 As my sister tresses lamented my disappearance,
 the brother of Memnon the Ethiop,
 the flying horse of Arsinoë, woman of Locris,
 arrived with flapping wings
 and carried me through the shadowy sky to be placed 55
 in Venus' modest lap.
 The Greek who resides in Canopus, Zephyrion's goddess
 herself, had made the arrangements.
 Wishing that Ariadne's crown not rest
 on heaven's spangled porch 60
 alone but that I, the spoils of a flaxen peak,
 might also glisten there,
 she placed me among the elder stars, still damp
 from my flight to the deities' precinct.
 I border on Virgo's torches and savage Leo's, 65
 not far from Lycaon's daughter.
 I make my descent in advance of the slow Boötes,
 who barely reaches the Ocean.
 I inhabit the paths of the gods by night, but the Dawn
 restores me to Tethys the ancient. 70
 By your leave, Rhamnusian maid, I will speak the truth
 with nothing concealed from fear.
 Though I risk the stars' reproach, the emotions stored
 in my loyal heart will out.
 These joys are not as great as the pains I suffer, 75
 away from my mistress's brow.
 We sampled a thousand scents together, though not
 in the days when she was a virgin.
 Brides, still flushed from the torch's glow, refuse
 to uncover your breasts and give 80
 your husbands your bodies before I receive your libations
 from onyx perfume jars.
 I speak to those who honor the laws in their beds.

The dust can drink the evil
 gifts of the girl who has given herself to adultery! 85
 I spurn unworthy offerings.
 Brides, may your peace increase and constant love
 inhabit your homes forever.
 My queen, when you gaze at the stars on holy days,
 and seek to placate Venus, 90
 do not permit me to languish deprived of scent
 but flood me with so many gifts
 the stars exclaim, "Make *me* a royal tress
 and Orion can shine on Aquarius."

1. **Conon:** mathematician and astronomer in the court of the Ptolemies in the third century B.C.; see head note.

5–6. **Love disrupted Diana's . . . Latmian cave:** Diana was identified with the moon. The reference is to the story that she once fell in love with a mortal, Endymion. At her request, Zeus granted him immortality and agelessness but with a catch: endless sleep. He lay on Mt. Latmos in Asia Minor. The goddess left her regular course to gaze at him there.

8. **Bernice:** see head note.

43–44. **Thyia's lucid child:** the sun. According to Hesiod, *Theogony* 371–74. Helios, the sun, Selene, the moon, and Eos, dawn, were the children of the Titans Hyperion and Thyia.

45–46. **the Medes created a sea . . . Athos:** Herodotus (7.24) describes how the Persians invading Greece in 480 B.C. dug a canal across the isthmus of Athos in northern Greece.

48. **Chalybes:** a tribe in Asia Minor famous for mining iron.

52. **the brother of Memnon the Ethiop:** Zephyrus, the west wind, who was the son of Eos (Dawn) and a Titan, Astraeus. Eos bore the hero Memnon to Tithonus, a Trojan prince. Eos' home is said to be in Ethiopia.

53. **the flying horse of Arsinoë, woman of Locris:** the reference is still to Zephyrus, the west wind, who is imagined in the form of a flying horse, like Pegasus. Arsinoë's temple was on Zephyrium (West Cape), a promontory near Alexandria. Arsinoë herself was known as Aphrodite Zephyritis. Hence Callimachus imagines that Zephyrus runs errands for her. The connection between Arsinoë and Locris, however, is unknown.

57. **The Greek who resides in Canopus:** as a Ptolemy, Arsinoë's ancestry was Greek or more precisely Macedonian. Canopus was a suburb of Alexandria on the western mouth of the Nile.

Zephyrion's goddess: see note on line 53.

59. **Ariadne's crown:** Ariadne is the princess abandoned by Theseus in Poem 64. Her crown was made into a constellation by Bacchus; see notes on Poem 64.52 and 251.

66. **Lycaon's daughter:** Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 2.401–530) tells the story. The daughter of the wicked king Lycaon, Callisto, was a chaste nymph who was spending her time in Diana's company when she was ravished by Jupiter. When her pregnancy was discovered, Diana expelled her. Jealous Juno then transformed her into a bear. Her son, Arcas, grew up to be a hunter. One day his mother met him in the woods and could not resist following him around. He would have killed her, since she was just a bear in his eyes, but Jupiter prevented this by changing them both into stars, the constellation Ursa Major ("the greater bear") and the star Arcturus ("guardian of the bear").

70. **restores me to Tethys:** Tethys, the wife of Oceanus, often personifies the sea. Constellations that sank beneath the horizon were said to be bathing in the sea, a privilege denied by Juno to Callisto, or Ursa Major; see note on line 66.

71. **Rhamnusian maid:** see note on Poem 64.395.

94. **Orion . . . Aquarius:** the two constellations are actually far away from each other. The idea is that the stars would not care about the orderly arrangement of the constellations if they could be tresses.

Poem 67

Poems sung by a man on his lover's porch, begging for admittance, constituted a popular genre. They were often addressed directly to the fair lady's locked door, which was accused of being cruel and indifferent for not opening. Poem 67 is a variation. The door involved has a reputation for opening too easily. He defends his conduct in conversation with a passerby.

Line 34 implies that the scene is Verona. The proper names mentioned are Roman, but there is no evidence connecting them with historical persons. The house belonged to a respectable widower named Balbus. It then passed to a father and son, whose promiscuous wife ruined the door's reputation by having affairs with her father-in-law and others, including a Postumius and a Cornelius. The door now belongs to one Caecilius and hopes to regain its good name.

Friend to a loving husband and friend to a parent,
hail! and Jupiter bless you,
O Door, who is said to have been a reliable servant

to Balbus, when he was your owner,
 but you slipped when the geezer died and you became 5
 a married door, they say.
 Tell us about the change and how you betrayed
 your master's ancient trust.
I am, as I hope to please my owner, Caecilius,
despite the rumors, innocent! 10
No one can cite a mistake committed by me.
It's just the custom in town.
Whenever a scandal happens, everyone shouts:
"Door, you're the one to blame!"
 A couple of words won't do. You need to make us 15
 see your point of view.
Why even try, since nobody wants to know?
 We do. Untie your tongue.
For starters, the statement is wrong that a virgin moved in.
It is true that her previous husband 20
had a dagger that dangled, a flabby beet, that never
raised a tent in his tunic.
His father, however, is said to have entered her bed
and polluted their piteous house.
Perhaps his heart was aflame with hidden lust, 25
or in view of his son's debility,
he might have felt that his muscular presence was needed
to loosen the virginal gown.
 An excellent parent you praise! What wondrous devotion!
 To piss in the lap of his son! 30
Other tales have made the rounds in Brixia,
in the shade of Cynus' tower,
city the sandy Mella gently skirts,
Verona's beloved mother.
Postumius enters the picture; Cornelius too. 35
She committed adultery with both.
Did somebody ask how a door on its master's porch
obtains such information,
nailed to my sill, excluded from gossip, merely
accustomed to open and close? 40
Time and again I've heard the woman confide
her sins to her maids in a whisper,

*using the names I have mentioned, unaware
that I have an ear and a tongue.
She added another I better not name for fear* 45
*he raise his reddish brow,
a lanky man for whom a treacherous womb
once caused a terrible row.*

4. **Balbus:** see head note.

9. **Caecilius:** see head note.

31. **Brixia:** modern Brescia, fifty miles west of Verona.

32. **Cycnus' tower:** Cycnus was a prince of the Ligurians, a tribe in northern Italy. He was a friend and kinsman of Phaethon, the son of Helios, who was killed when he tried to drive his father's chariot; see note on Poem 64.291. According to Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 2.367–81), Cycnus was so grieved that the gods changed him into a swan, which is what his name means in Greek. Nothing is known about Cycnus' tower.

33. **Mella:** a stream just west of Brixia.

34. **Verona's . . . mother:** the implication is that Verona was founded by Brixians, but no other source confirms this.

45. **she added another:** the identity of the "lanky man" is unknown. As in the case of "Lesbia," however, Catullus' clues probably would have identified him to his original audience.

Poem 68

Poem 68 may represent two separate poems. Lines 1–40 are addressed to "Mallius" and 41–160 are addressed to "Allius." "Mallius" is lonely (lines 5–6), but Catullus wishes "Allius" and "his life" (presumably his wife or lover) continued happiness (line 115). On the other hand, the similarity of names seems too great to be coincidental. Also, a single argument runs throughout. In line 10, "Mallius" has requested a poem. Catullus says that he cannot produce one and seems ready to fall silent at line 40, but at line 41 he rallies, saying that he cannot be silent about his friend's former kindness. Then at lines 149–50, he says that he has sent "Allius" as much of a poem as he could manage—which seems to refer back to line 10 and the request from "Mallius." Also very similar expressions of grief over his brother's death bind the beginning and end; lines 22–24 are identical to 94–96.

I think that the addressee is Catullus' friend Mallius or Manlius Torquatus, the bridegroom of Poem 61, throughout. At line 41, to retain a veneer of discretion,

Catullus starts calling him “Allius,” as an almost comically transparent pseudonym. This would mean that the euphoric groom of Poem 61 wrote to Catullus in Verona at some point—before, during, or after his marriage—asking for poems to help him get through restless nights in a lonely bed. Line 115, on the other hand, seems to imply that his wife or lover is still alive and well disposed. Hence, his problem might consist of a temporary separation.

To think that oppressed by fortune and bitter chance
 you send me a tearful epistle
 to say you have foundered in heavy seas and ask
 that I save you from imminent death,
 since holy Venus deprives you of gentle sleep, 5
 alone in your celibate bed,
 and the Muses of ancient poets, though sweet, do not
 beguile your restless mind—
 it makes me grateful. You call me a friend and seek
 the gifts of Love and the Muses. 10
 But lest unaware of my grief you imagine, O Mallius,
 that I hate the duties of friendship,
 hear of my flood of misfortune and stop expecting
 joyous gifts from the sad.
 When I first received a toga of white and enjoyed 15
 the pleasant spring of my years,
 my life was a game. The goddess of bittersweet cares
 and I were well acquainted.
 But grief at the loss of my brother transformed me. Ah brother
 torn from my helpless hands! 20
 Your death has demolished everything valuable, brother.
 Our house lies buried with you.
 All of our joys are ruined, the joys your love
 sweetened and strengthened in life.
 Because of his death, I have driven all of those passions 25
 and all of those joys from my thoughts.
 You write, “To stay in Verona, Catullus, is shameful.
 All the superior sort
 are warming their frigid limbs in the bed you abandoned.”
 “Sad,” I would say, not “shameful.” 30
 You will pardon me then for not conferring the gifts
 that grief has made impossible.

Why I don't even have the books I would need, since Rome
 is my home, my support. It is there
 that I pluck the fruits of my life. Just one of my boxes 35
 of books has followed me here.
 Accordingly, please do not infer that my heart
 is hostile or spirit mean
 because I lack the resources to grant your requests.
 I'd otherwise grant them unasked. 40

Poem 68B

Muses, I must reveal how Allius helped me
 and praise the devotion he showed,
 lest Time in its flight across the forgetful ages
 bury his zeal in the dark.
 Receive my account and reveal it to millions. Make 45
 my papyrus a talkative crone.
 [At least one line is missing.]
 his fame in death increase
 and no dangling spider weave her web above
 the deserted name of Allius. 50
 You know the cares the duplicitous goddess of Amathus
 caused me and how I was crushed,
 and burned like Sicily's seething peak or the Malian
 springs of Oetaean Thermopylae.
 My gloomy eyes were always dissolving in tears; 55
 the rain on my cheeks was incessant.
 It fell like a glistening river that leaps from a mossy
 rock near the top of a mountain.
 At the end of its headlong career down the spine of a valley
 it crosses a bustling road, 60
 providing the weary traveler sweet refreshment
 when fields are cracked with heat.
 Like a favorable breeze that gently descends upon sailors
 caught in a blinding storm
 and reciting their humble prayers to Castor and Pollux, 65
 Allius came to my rescue.
 He cleared a path to a well-protected field;

he gave his home to me
 and my mistress for us to enjoy our mutual love.
 My glistening goddess arriving, 70
 placing her radiant foot on the burnished sill,
 was announced by the creak of her sandal.
 Thus burning with passion Laodamia arrived
 at the house of Protesilaus—
 an ill-omened beginning. No victim had soothed the lords 75
 of heaven with sacred blood.
 Rhamnusian virgin, may nothing be so delightful
 that I act without their blessing!
 Laodamia was taught by her husband's demise
 how altars thirst for blood. 80
 She was forced to release the neck of her groom before
 a second winter's languid
 nights allowed her to quench her avid desire
 and endure the loss of her marriage,
 known by the Fates to be imminent once her husband 85
 marched on the Ilian walls.
 By Helen's abduction, Troy had just provoked
 the Argive leaders' invasion,
 Troy, the tomb of Europe and Asia! The bitter
 pyre of men and virtues, 90
 and the source of my brother's wretched death. Ah brother,
 torn from my helpless hands!
 Ah joyful light, which was torn from my helpless brother!
 Our house lies buried with you.
 All of our joys are destroyed, the joys your love 95
 sweetened and nourished in life.
 And now you are lying among the graves of strangers,
 far from the ashes of kin,
 in Troy the obscene, unhappily buried abroad,
 in the alien soil of Troy, 100
 whither the bloom of the manhood of Greece is said
 to have hurried, deserting its hearths,
 lest Paris have time to enjoy his illicit love
 in a tranquil conjugal suite.
 And that was the reason, loveliest Laodamia, 105
 your marriage, sweeter than life,

was destroyed. You fell from such a peak of love
 to the depths of a steep abyss,
 such as the one, renowned in Greece, that drains
 the swampy fields of Pheneus. 110
 Amphitryon's pseudo-son reputedly shattered
 Cyllene's innermost bones
 the time that he routed with arrows Stymphalian creatures,
 obeying an inferior lord,
 so another god could tread on heaven's porch 115
 and Hebe's virginity end.
 That pit was not as deep as your maidenly love,
 which taught you to bear the yoke.
 An only daughter's long-awaited child,
 an heir to the family wealth, 120
 born just in time to spoil the impious joys
 of the seething next-of-kin
 and put the vulture to flight, is not so dear
 to a father worn with age.
 No snowy dove has gloried so in her mate, 125
 and the dove is reputedly shameless,
 constantly snatching more kisses with piercing beak,
 than a most promiscuous woman.
 You alone surpassed their passions, when you
 and your fair-haired man were united. 130
 And my luminous love was your equal, or nearly so,
 when she placed herself in my arms.
 A glistening Cupid, clad in a saffron sheath,
 flitted from side to side.
 True, she has not been content with Catullus alone, 135
 but we will endure her occasional
 indiscretions and avoid being obnoxious like fools.
 Often, the queen of the gods
 swallows her burning wrath at Jupiter's guilt
 knowing his countless deceptions. 140
 And yet it is wrong to liken ourselves to the gods.
 Don't play the doddering parent!
 No bride was she, conferred by the hands of a father
 in a cloud of Assyrian scent.

The wonderful gifts she gave were stolen by night, 145
 snatched from the lap of her husband.
 She marks the day she visits us with a whiter
 stone. What more do you want?
 This gift of song is the best I can do to repay
 your many favors, Allius, 150
 and keep today and other days from defiling
 your name with squalor and rust.
 The gods will add the generous blessings that Themis
 conferred in the past on the pious.
 May happiness follow you and your life and the house 155
 that delighted my mistress and me.
 And he who first to us . . . [*Several words are unintelligible.*]
 the source of all my goods,
 and especially my light, who is dearer to me than myself,
 whose life makes living sweet. 160

11. **Mallius:** see head note.

33. **the books I would need:** The Latin, *magna copia scriptorum*, is ambiguous, meaning either a supply of authors or of writings. Some editors and translators choose “authors” and remark that Catullus was typical of Hellenistic poets in his heavy reliance on his literary predecessors. But Catullus might also have meant that if he had his “writings” with him, he could have sent Mallius a poem that he had already composed.

41. **Allius:** see head note. Editors restore the name here from an unintelligible string of letters (*quamfallius* corrected to *qua me Allius*), but the name Allius is clearly transmitted in lines 50 and 66.

51. **Amathus:** the goddess of Amathus is Venus. See note on Poem 36.12–15.

53. **Sicily’s seething peak:** Mt. Aetna.

53–54. **the Malian springs of Oetaean Thermopylae:** the name of Thermopylae, the famous pass on the coast of Greece, means “Hot Gates,” from naturally hot springs in the area. Oeta is a mountain, Malia a town, in the vicinity.

65. **Castor and Pollux:** see note on Poem 4.27.

73–74. **Laodamia . . . Protesilaus:** in the *Iliad* (2.695–702), we learn that Protesilaus was the first Greek to die at Troy, killed as he leapt from his ship. He was survived by a new wife. Later poets embellished the story.

Catullus seems to be thinking of a version mentioned also by Propertius (1.19.7–10) that Protesilaus was allowed to return to life temporarily because of Laodamia's great grief.

77. **Rhamnusian virgin:** see note on Poem 64.395.

110. **Pheneus:** a low-lying town at the foot of Mt. Cyllene in Arcadia, rural southern Greece. Shafts in the area that drained flood waters were said to have been built by Hercules. The shafts are mentioned in Pausanias' *Description of Greece* (8.14.1).

111. **Amphitryon's pseudo-son:** Hercules, the son of Jupiter and Alcmena. Alcmena was married to Amphitryon. Jupiter seduced her by disguising himself as Amphitryon. When the truth came out, Amphitryon acceded to Jupiter's use of his wife and raised Hercules.

112. **Cyllene's innermost bones:** a reference to Hercules' legendary creation of drainage shafts in the area; see note on line 110.

113. **Stymphalian creatures:** a reference to Hercules' fifth labor. Lake Stymphalus in southern Greece was inhabited by man-eating birds with bronze talons and deadly feathers that they shot like arrows. Hercules killed some and frightened the rest away with a bronze rattle.

114. **inferior lord:** through the machinations of Juno, Hercules was forced to take orders from Eurystheus, King of Mycenae. Eurystheus assigned the famous Twelve Labors.

115. **another god:** Hercules was born mortal but was transformed into a god at the end of his mortal life.

116. **Hebe's virginity:** when Hercules was deified, he married Hebe, Jupiter's daughter and the personification of youth.

142. **Don't play the doddering parent!:** The line is ambiguous and its general meaning is unclear. It is literally, "Take up (or get rid of) the unpleasant burden of a tremulous parent." I think that Catullus is exhorting himself not to be concerned with Lesbia's morals, as an aging father might be. Others feel that two or more lines are missing and that the train of Catullus' thought cannot be reconstructed.

147–48. **a whiter stone:** obviously a way to distinguish a lucky day, but the details are unknown.

153. **Themis:** law or order personified as a Titan goddess, the mother of the Fates and a source of many blessings.

157. As transmitted, the last three words of this verse make no sense: *terram dedit aufert* ("earth has given removes"). No persuasive emendation has been proposed.

Poem 69

Rufus, stop wondering why no woman will slide
her tender thigh beneath you,
not though you weaken her will with gifts of fine
apparel and sparkling gems.
An injurious rumor has spread that a savage goat 5
inhabits the vale of your arms,
a terrible beast and not the sort with whom
a beautiful girl would lie.
So murder the pest or, left alone in your room,
cease to wonder why. 10

1. As is discussed in the introduction, the poem is almost certainly addressed to M. Caelius **Rufus**.

7. **a terrible beast:** *mala valde . . . bestia*, in Latin. In 56 B.C., Caelius prosecuted a former political ally named Calpurnius Bestia. He accused him *inter alia* of killing two or more wives by smearing a fast-acting poison, aconite, on their vaginas as they slept (Pliny the Elder 27.4). Catullus' reference to "a terrible beast" (*bestia* in Latin), with whom pretty girls would not choose to sleep, sounds like a clever, topical pun.

Poem 70

My woman says that she would prefer none other
to me though Jupiter sought her.
She says, but a woman's words to her lover belong
on wind and rapid water.

Poem 71

If a horrible goat of the arms or pains in the feet
 rightly afflict any man,
 it must be that rival of yours, who uses your love.
 Everything evens out!
 Whenever they couple, the stench torments your girl, 5
 and he nearly dies of the gout.

3. **that rival of yours:** I think that Catullus is talking to himself, as he does in Poem 8. The rival must be the same Rufus who is troubled by a “goat of the arms” in Poem 69.

Poem 72

You said in the past that Catullus alone understood you,
you preferred my embraces to Jove's.
My love was uncommon, the love a father feels
for his sons and sons-in-law, Lesbia.
Now I do understand you and though my fire
is hotter, I think you are fickle
and cheap. How so? Such injury makes desire
greater, but lessens affection.

1. **Catullus alone understood you:** the Latin is ambiguous, meaning either “that Catullus alone knew you” or “that you knew or desired to know Catullus alone.” I have opted for the former because the idea of understanding Lesbia recurs in line 5 and because in Poem 3, Lesbia’s sparrow, who is analogous to the poet in several ways, is praised for having gotten to know the girl intimately, as well as she knew her mother. For the assumption in a different context that a worthy male lover has unique understanding of his sweetheart, see the epigram on the grammarian Crassicus (note on Poem 95.1).

Poem 73

Don't ever desire to earn the affection of anyone
or dream that a man can be loyal.
The world is ungrateful, kindness means nothing at all.
It only bores and annoys.
I know. I used to be my worst attacker's
"one and only friend."

Poem 74

Gellius heard that his uncle was fond of reproaching
 frivolous words and deeds.
 To silence correction, he diddled his uncle's wife
 and made him the new Harpocrates.
 Mission accomplished. Let Gellius come in his mouth; 5
 his uncle will say not a word.

1. L. **Gellius** Poplicola, a noble about Catullus' age, may have been a member of Clodia's inner circle. He married the sister of one Atratinus, also the name of Caelius' prosecutor in 56 B.C. Catullus aims some of his coarsest abuse at Gellius. Besides cuckolding an uncle (Poems 74 and 88), he performed fellatio twice daily on a certain Victor (Poem 80), enjoyed incestuous relations with his mother, sisters, and aunts (Poems 88–90), seduced "Lesbia" merely from love of treachery (Poem 91), and insulted Catullus in verse (Poem 116). According to Valerius Maximus (591), Gellius was formally accused of seducing his stepmother and plotting to kill his father but successfully defended himself.

3. **diddled**: the Latin, *perdepsuit*, is literally to knead dough.

4. **Harpocrates**: an Egyptian deity pictured as a youth holding a finger over his lips as a symbol of silence and mystery.

Poem 75

My mind has been brought to this by your treachery, Lesbia,
 so wrecked itself being loyal,
 that I couldn't wish you well, though perfect, or cease
 to love, whatever you do.

Poem 76

If it brings any joy to a man to remember acts
 of kindness, to know he was faithful
 and never betrayed a trust or falsely invoked
 the gods to deceive an ally,
 many pleasures await your old age, Catullus, 5

from this ungrateful love.
 Everything mortals can say and do for each other
 was said and done by you,
 and all of it wasted, spent on a thankless heart.
 Why do you torture yourself? 10
 Why not be strong, recover, and end your misery,
 since the gods are unwilling to help?
 Although it is hard to shed an ancient love,
 do so, by any means.
 That is your one salvation, your victory. Do it, 15
 whether you can or cannot.
 Gods, if you feel compassion or ever assisted
 men in mortal danger,
 consider my plight. If you find my life has been pure,
 cast out this fatal disease, 20
 this insidious palsy, that sneaks inside my limbs
 and empties my heart of joy.
 I no longer ask that she love in return or do
 the impossible: choose to be virtuous.
 I ask for a cure for myself, to shed this infection, 25
 O gods, in return for my piety.

Poem 77

Rufus, the friend I trusted in vain—"In vain"?
 A great and costly mistake!
 Was it all to deceive me, to scorch my intestines, to steal
 everything good that I owned?
 It was and you did. O pitiless poison of life, 5
 O friendship's fatal disease!

Poem 78

Of Gallus' brothers, the one has a beautiful wife,
 the other a beautiful son.
 Gallus, a beautiful person, arranges amours,
 so the beauties are sleeping together.

How foolish of Gallus, who's married: instructing his nephew 5
in the art of seducing an aunt!

1. Nothing further is known about Catullus' **Gallus**, who is mentioned only in this poem.

Poem 78B

I resent your foul saliva polluting the pure
lips of a girl so pure.
Your day will come. The ages will know who you are
and lady Fame will talk.

Poem 79

Lesbius beautiful? Sure! And more cherished by Lesbia
Than you and your family, Catullus.
This beauty would certainly sell Catullus and kin
for three familiar kisses.

1. **Lesbius beautiful:** in Latin, *Lesbius est pulcher*, a pun suggesting that Lesbia's brother is Clodius Pulcher, which implies that Lesbia is a Clodia.
4. **three familiar kisses:** the general idea seems to be that Lesbia and her brother are too close and that Lesbius is treacherous, but the point of three familiar kisses, literally "three kisses of known men" (*tria notorum suavia*), is obscure. It is possibly an allusion to currying favor with the triumvirs.

Poem 80

Gellius, what is the reason those rosy lips
are whiter than winter's snow
when you exit your house in the morning or end your siesta
at two in the afternoon?
Something is up. Is it true you devour a masculine 5
midriff's engorged extension?
"Precisely!" Victor's ruptured groin and your semen-
spotted lips exclaim.

1. **Gellius**: see note on Poem 74.1.

7. **Victor** is probably the cognomen of an otherwise unknown man.

Poem 81

Does the crowded city contain no beautiful man
 for you to love, Juventius,
 besides that visitor, paler than gilded stone,
 from the moribund town of Pisaro?
 He amuses you now. You dare to prefer him to me. 5
 Do you know what a crime you commit?

2. **Juventius**: see note on Poem 24.2.

3–4. **visitor . . . from the moribund town of Pisaro**: Pisaro was a town on the Adriatic coast that had apparently fallen on hard times. Nothing is known of the Pisaran native whom Juventius befriended.

Poem 82
To Quintius

If you want Catullus to owe you his eyes or something
 dearer to him than his eyes,
 don't steal what is dearer to him than whatever you prize,
 if anything, more than your eyes.

Quintius is mentioned again in 100 as a Veronese youth who loves Aufillena. A Quintia, possibly his sister, is compared unfavorably with Lesbia in Poem 86.

Poem 83

When her husband is listening, Lesbia likes to belittle me,
 much to the moron's delight.
 O mule, are you totally daft? Her silence would show
 I was safely forgotten. Her growling
 just means she remembers and, more to the point, is upset: 5
 she burns and has to talk.

Poem 84

Arrius always liked to cite “hadvantages,”
 and refer to “hinsidious plots.”
 He considered a speech a success if he said “hinsidious
 plots” as loud as he could.
 His mother, his uncle—not the slave—and his mother’s 5
 parents did the same.
 When Arrius went to Syria, ears relaxed.
 The words in question were soft
 and smooth; we briefly ceased to fear their like.
 Then horrible news arrived. 10
 Once Arrius entered the region, the water he crossed
 became the “Hionian Sea.”

1. A praetor in 73 B.C., Q. **Arrius** fought successfully the following year against the forces of Crixus and Spartacus, the leaders of the famous slave rebellion. He worked closely with Crassus thereafter. The reference to a journey to Syria in Poem 84 may mean that Arrius accompanied the triumvir on his ill-fated Asiatic campaign. Aulus Gellius (13.6.3) quotes the grammarian P. Nigidius Figulus, a contemporary of Catullus, as saying that mistaken aspiration (i.e., adding initial h’s where they do not belong) is characteristic of “rustic speech.”

12. **Hionian**: the Ionian sea, the Mediterranean between southern Italy and western Greece.

Poem 85

I hate and I love. You ask me why? Who knows?
 But I feel it occur and I’m tortured.

Poem 86

Many call Quintia “beautiful.” Fair and tall,
 impressive posture? Sure.
 But totally beautiful? No. Her magnificent body
 is void of wit and charm.

Lesbia illustrates beauty, complete and superlative, 5
and robs all the others of theirs.

1. **Quintia:** see note on Poem 82.2.

Poem 87

No woman can truthfully say she was loved as much
as my Lesbia was by me.
No loyalty found in any alliance compares
with that in my love for you.

Poem 88

Gellius, what can be said of a naked, nocturnal
orgy with mother and sister?
What can be said of a man who cuckolds his uncle?
Do you know the size of your sin?
Faraway Tethys and Oceanus, the father 5
of nymphs, would rinse in vain.
Nothing is fouler, not though a man should bow
his head and devour himself.

1. **Gellius:** see note on Poem 74.1.
5. **Tethys:** see note on Poem 66.70.

Poem 89

Gellius stays quite thin. With a hearty and good-hearted
mother, a beautiful sister,
a generous uncle, ubiquitous feminine kin,
how could he *not* be thin?
He never touches a thing, unless it's a sin 5
—which explains the shape he's in.

1. **Gellius:** see note on Poem 74.1.

Poem 90

The child of the passion that Gellius shares with his mother
 should study Persian lore,
 for magi are born from mothers and sons, according
 to scurrilous Persian belief.
 His hymn would please the gods as his fire melted 5
 a greasy peritoneum.

1. **Gellius:** see note on Poem 74.1.

6. **peritoneum:** Latin *omentum*. Strabo (15.732) explains that the Persians did not pollute sacred fires with bloody offerings, but some say they did add a portion of the peritoneum, the membrane enclosing the bowels of the sacrificial animal.

Poem 91

In this, my wretched, my ruinous love, I thought
 you would never betray me, Gellius,
 not because I considered you constant or able
 to keep your mind from crime,
 but I was, I remarked, consumed by the love of a woman 5
 who was neither your mother nor sister.
 I felt that our close and frequent association
 was an insufficient cause.
 But not for you, so great is the joy you take
 in every kind of crime. 10

2. **Gellius:** see note on Poem 74.1.

Poem 92

Lesbia curses me constantly, never a moment
 of silence. So clearly she loves me!
 How do I know? Identical symptoms. I constantly
 curse her—and love her to death.

Poem 93

I'm not that eager to please you, Caesar. Couldn't
care if you're black or white.

Poem 94

The Penis is caught in adultery. Naturally so.
The pot is a vegetable picker.

1. **Penis:** Latin *mentula* (penis) established in Poem 29.13 as a cognomen for Mamurra; see note on 29.3.
2. **The pot, etc.:** The point is obscure. Catullus apparently cites a proverb to the effect that pots themselves attract vegetables. In the same way, "Penis" attracts adulterous relationships.

Poem 95

Cinna's *Zmyrna* has just appeared; it spent
nine harvests and winters aborning,
while Hortensius finished a million . . .
.
Zmyrna will reach the arching waves of the Satrachus, 5
read by the grizzled millennia,
but the *Annals* Volusius wrote will perish in Padua,
loose-fitting mackerel tunics.
I love my friend's petite creations. The mob
can have its tumid Antimachus. 10

1. C. Helvius **Cinna** was one of the major poets of Catullus' generation. He may also have been the poet who was killed by rioters in the wake of Caesar's assassination because he was mistaken for an assassin named Cinna. The incident is reported in Plutarch's *Caesar* and dramatized in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* III.3 ("I am Cinna *the poet!*" "Tear him for his bad verses.").

His *Zmyrna* was probably named after its heroine, whose melodramatic tale of incestuous love is told by Ovid, using an alternative form of

with no way of choosing between the former and latter.
 In fact, his butt is superior.
 It hasn't got teeth. His mouth has gigantic incisors, 5
 the gums of a peasant's cart,
 and a rictus evoking the vulva displayed by a mule
 when she pees on a summer's day.
 He seduces the girls by the dozen and credits his charm.
 Where are my shackles and millstone? 10
 A female who touches this man would presumably lick
 a palsied hangman's ass.

2. **Aemilius** is a common family name of an otherwise unknown man.

Poem 98

The saying about talkative fools is perfectly apt
 for you, malodorous Victius:
 given the chance, your tongue would be good for cleaning
 butts or farmers' sandals.
 If you want to destroy us entirely, Victius, open 5
 your mouth. Your will is done.

2. **Victius** is apparently the family name of an otherwise unknown man.

Poem 99

I stole a kiss from you at play, Juventius,
 sweeter than sweet ambrosia,
 but not for free. The pain is still fresh—of being nailed
 to a cross for more than an hour
 while I tried to apologize, failing despite my tears 5
 to lessen your anger a whit.
 Your response was immediate: soaking your mouth in water,
 you wiped it with both of your hands,
 lest any contagion remain, as if there were spit
 on your lips from a rancid whore. 10
 And all of the time I was savagely racked by the pangs
 of unrequited Love.

The kiss I stole was thus transformed: ambrosia
 changed to hellebore.
 Knowing the way you punish desperate devotion, 15
 I swear to abstain in the future.

1. **Juventius:** see note on Poem 24.2.

Poem 100

Caelius loves Aufillenus and Quintius wants
 Aufillena. A brother and sister
 have smitten the flower of Veronese manhood! Is that
 what sweet fraternity means?
 Whom do I favor? Caelius, you. You proved 5
 through deeds your singular friendship
 when madness was scorching my bones. Be fortunate, Caelius!
 And may your love prevail!

1. **Caelius:** This poem does not seem to refer to M. Caelius Rufus, who has no known connection with Verona and was anything but faithful to Catullus.

1–2. Nothing is known of **Aufillenus** or **Aufillena** except what can be inferred from this poem and Poems 110 and 111, which are denunciations of Aufillena's character.

Quintius: see note on Poem 82.

Poem 101

Through many a sea and many nations borne,
 I come to these sorrowful rites
 to render to you my final services, brother,
 and speak to your ashes in vain,
 since Fortune has taken your self, ah piteous brother 5
 unworthily torn from my hands!
 But now as our parents' ancient custom requires,
 accept these funeral gifts,
 wet with brotherly tears, and into eternity,
 brother, hail and farewell. 10

3. **brother:** in Poems 65 and 68, Catullus mentions that his beloved brother died and was buried in the vicinity of Troy.

Poem 102

If ever a friend depended on somebody's silence
and tested and proved it completely,
you'll find my religion the same as theirs, Cornelius,
and call me the new Harpocrates.

3. **Cornelius:** see note on Poem 1.3.
4. **Harpocrates:** an Egyptian deity, the son of Isis and Osiris. In statues, he was represented as a child with his finger touching his mouth. This led to his acquiring an association with secrecy.

Poem 103

Returning my ten sestertia, Silo, be rude
and defiant, but if you go limp
whenever you think of my money, don't try to be
a rude and defiant pimp.

1. **ten sestertia:** ten thousand sesterces.
Silo ("Snub-nosed") was a common Roman cognomen.

Poem 104

Do you think I was able to curse my life, the woman
I valued more than my eyes?
My love was too desperate for that. But you and your Tappo
distort and exaggerate everything.

1. Catullus uses "**my life**" as a term of endearment apparently for Lesbia in Poem 109. These lines seem to say that despite appearances he would never curse her in earnest.
3. **Tappo:** probably just the cognomen of an otherwise unknown person, but A. Walde, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: C. Win-

ter, 1938–56), 2.648 s.v. *tappulam*, transmits the interesting suggestion that it was the name of a stock character in farce, derived from the Greek verb for marveling, *thapo*. A “Tappo” took everything at face value and would fail to see beneath the surface of Catullus’ poems.

Poem 105

The Penis attempts to scale the Pimplean heights,
but is tumbled by Muses with pitchforks.

1. **Penis:** see notes on Poem 94.1 and Poem 29.3.

Pimplean heights: Pimpla was a fountain in Pieria, a mountainous region in northern Greece where the Muses were worshiped.

Poem 106

What does an auctioneer with a pretty boy
imply if not “For Sale”?

Poem 107

The soul obtains the purest joy when a fervent,
hopeless prayer is fulfilled.
Your return to my longing arms, my Lesbia, dearer
than gold, is such a joy,
You came of your own accord when I hungered but hoped 5
no more! O brighter day!
Does anyone have a happier life? Could a man
imagine more perfect joy?

Poem 108

If the people should vote to destroy your ancient remains,
depraved and grey, Cominius,
they’d first remove your slanderous tongue
to feed a hungry vulture.

A sable crow would eat your eyes; the dogs, 5
your intestines; and wolves, the rest.

2. **Cominius:** possibly one of two brothers, knights named Publius and Gaius respectively, who incurred disfavor in 66 B.C. by bringing charges against a popular tribune.

Poem 109

You promise, my life, that *this* will last forever,
this happy love we share.
Mighty divinities, give her the power to honor
that promise, make her sincere,
and permit us to keep our perpetual pact of holy 5
friendship all of our lives.

Poem 110

Honest girls are always praised, Aufillena,
and they get the prearranged fee.
But you I despise because you broke your promise
and because of your criminal greed.
Honor delivers, chastity simply refuses, 5
but stealing gifts by fraud,
Aufillena, outdoes the eager whore who sells
herself for any purpose.

1. **Aufillena:** see note on Poem 100.1–2.

Poem 111

To live content with a single man is a wife's
most glorious praise, Aufillena,
but sleep with anyone else before your uncle—
before you mother cousins!

2. **Aufillena:** see note on Poem 100.1–2.

Poem 112

Naso, compared to your rival, *you* are a giant,
a giant and also a queer.

1. **Naso** is a frequent cognomen, the appellative of *nasum* (nose), and was borne, for example, by the poet Ovid. Catullus' Naso is otherwise unknown.

rival: literally, “the man with whom you descend.” I take this as referring to entering the forum as a candidate.

giant: literally, “much of a man” (*multus homo*), apparently an idiomatic expression. Some interpret as “busybody.”

2. **queer:** *patheticus*; a Greek term, literally, “passive.”

Poem 113

Cinna, when Pompey was consul before, there were two
in Maecilia's intimate circle.
He's consul again and each of the two is a thousand.
How fertile adultery's seed!

1. **Cinna:** see note on Poem 95.1. Pompey was consul in 70 B.C. and then again in 55, the apparent date of the poem.

2. **Maecilia** is a fairly common family name of an otherwise unknown individual.

Poem 114

The Penis is said to be rich because of his excellent
tract at Fermo. Right!
Birds of every feather, hunting and fishing.
So what? It loses money.
Rich except for his poverty. The fields
are fine. Their master is starving.

5

1. **Penis:** see notes on Poem 94.1 and Poem 29.3.

2. **Fermo:** a town on the Adriatic coast of central Italy.

Poem 115

Thirty-some acres of meadow are Penis's now,
 plus forty of arable land.
 The rest are waterways. He must be richer
 than Croesus with such an estate,
 the meadows, the towering woods, and lakes to the sea 5
 and the realm of the Hyperboreans.
 But he is the greatest, beyond his estate, no man
 but the menacing Penis the Great!

1. **Penis's**: see notes on Poem 94.1 and Poem 29.3.
4. **Croesus**: the proverbially rich, sixth-century B.C. king of Lydia in Asia Minor.

Poem 116

Ransacking the songs of Battus' son like a hound,
 looking for something to send
 to soften your wrath and stop you from constantly hitting
 my head with hostile spears,
 I now perceive my labor's futility, Gellius, 5
 and know our prayers have failed.
 We'll dodge your barrage of spears, but ours will stick
 and you will pay the price.

1. **Battus' son**: the Hellenistic poet, Callimachus. Poem 66 is a translation of one of his works. On Battus, see notes on Poem 65.16 and Poem 7.4–5. Catullus seems to say that he contemplated sending translations of Callimachus to Gellius.
5. **Gellius**: see note on Poem 74.1.

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DAVID MULROY, associate professor of classics at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, has published two other translated collections, *Early Greek Lyric Poetry* and *Horace's Odes and Epodes*. He has performed his translations of Catullus' poems at poetry slams in Milwaukee bars to enthusiastic response.

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